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THE PARABLES: THEIR BACKGROUND AND LOCAL SETTING

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BY THE

REV. N. LEVISON

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TO

THE REV. GEORGE DAVIDSON, B.Sc.

OF ST. MARY'S U.F. CHURCH, EDINBURGH

BELOVED PASTOR, MINISTER, GUIDE AND FRIEND

THIS BOOK

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

PREFACE

THE parables of the New Testament have received their full share of attention from the most competent Biblical scholars. Thus there would seem to be little to add to the manifold literature which has appeared on this subject. A closer view, however, reveals two phases of the particular teaching which have received but little consideration, due to the lack of first-hand information and to the grave uncertainty concerning the historical background of the individual parables. These two defects, apart from the difficulties of idiomatic translation of the Aramaic, or Hebrew, with textual corruptions and the misplacement of the subject-matter, still leave much to be done in the matter of clarifying the teaching of the parables. Nor has the theological value of the parables received the attention due to it. Expositors have often allowed their imagina-

tions to run riot, and have drawn conclusions which are not found in the parables, or they have fastened on the mere shadow and lost the substance.

It is in the hope of directing the attention of scholars and readers of the New Testament to these very important phases that I venture to write these pages. The exegetical treatment of the parables has been so thorough that I shall not devote any space to it, nor shall I deal with textual or critical questions. My aim is to set forth, in as simple a manner as is possible, my understanding of the subject-matter and meaning of the parables. I shall avoid Greek and Hebrew terms, and in cases where it is necessary to discuss such words I shall give them in Latin characters, dividing them into syllables to aid pronunciation.

My qualifications for supplying the local colouring are based upon my great privilege of having been brought up in Galilee, within sight of Nazareth and the surrounding country—the very places in which a great many of the parables were spoken. When I say that, up to the time I was sent to school in Jerusalem, I had not seen a vehicle of

any description, and that the Old Testament narratives were as intelligible as the freshly written accounts of yesterday's events, it may indicate how primitive and free from change our life in Safad was.

Further, it was my lot to be brought up in one of the most pious homes of a very orthodox Jewish city, and, because of that, I learnt not only to look down on Nazareth altitudinally, but also to contemn it as the home of the Nazarene—the source of all the ills which have overtaken our people for the last two thousand years! The intense hatred of Jesus which fills the heart of every pious Jew can better be imagined than described, and the orthodox Jew of to-day still believes with all his heart that "Nothing good can come out of Nazareth."

Time and thought have changed the altitude of places and people in my mind, and I have come to look upon Nazareth and the Nazarene from a different viewpoint. I have climbed the Hill of Nazareth, sometimes on my intellectual feet, sometimes on the hands and knees of faith. My daily journeyings have been between Nazareth and Calvary, and in the

course of them I have worn a path for myself. It is in the hope of saving some from wandering in a wilderness of thought, such as I experienced, that I take the courage to write this book.

My thanks are due to all those who have helped in the preparation of this work. I am particularly indebted to my friend, the Rev. R. L. Blair, B.D., Minister Emeritus of St. George's, Montrose, who has gone over the MS. and made many helpful suggestions and corrections. Further, I take delight in thanking other friends who have been helpful with their suggestions. Finally, I thank my wife for all the assistance she has so willingly given me.

N. L.

The U.F. Manse,
Johnshaven, Scotland, 1926.

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INTRODUCTION

BECAUSE it is found in the New Testament, we take for granted the parabolic method which Jesus so usually employed. But we know that two of the Synoptists felt the difficulty that the method created, and sought to explain it. They have both failed and succeeded in their attempt. They have been successful in so far as they raised the issue, but they have only carried the question back one step farther into the realm of perplexity.

Finding it difficult to reason out why Jesus resorted to the parabolic method, like the pious Jews they were, they sought the answer in the Old Testament, and the call of Isaiah (Isa. vi. 9–10) suggested itself as a solution of the difficulty.

Accordingly (Mark iv. 12 ; Matt. xiii. 14–15) they have indicated that Jesus used parables that men might hear and not understand,

and might see and not perceive. It is worthy of notice that there is considerable difference in the rendering of the quotation. Matthew's version is word for word from the Septuagint, while that of Mark is a very loose quotation, the first and second clauses in Isaiah being interchanged and the last clause freely paraphrased.

Now, in the first place, we must rule out one of the quotations, for Jesus could not have made both. If we prefer the Marcan quotation and take the Matthæan one as an extension of it, is it not possible to conclude further that the Marcan quotation is a personal one, and not one made by Jesus ?

In the second place, Luke's silence must mean something, for it is an accepted fact that Luke had our first two Gospels before him when he wrote. And here we may reflect that, for Luke, the written parable would not raise the same difficulty as the spoken one did for those who heard it. Luke, indeed, would find in the parables a very substantial part of the teaching of Jesus, which would not only be invaluable to him, but would also be free from the difficulties which they raised for the

hearers. The written documents would naturally lend themselves to a finer appreciation than would the spoken word, which the hearers again and again confessed their inability to follow. Thus the author of our second Gospel shows his dislike for the parabolic method by the limited number he includes in his Gospel, while Luke shows his appreciation by recording a great many parables which Matthew and Mark do not so much as hint at.

In view of what had been said, we cannot help concluding that the explanations given are personal explanations of the authors of our first and second Gospels. If it be true that Peter was responsible for the material of our second Gospel, then the difficulty was his, and he expressed it in loose quotation from Isa. vi. 9–10. Matthew (not Q) extended the quotation to its full Septuagint limits, and Luke rejected it altogether as unfitting. Jesus' own reason for adopting the parabolic method will appear from the first parable.

Some students suggest that the Master adopted the parabolic method because it was in vogue among the teachers of His day;

some would even have us believe that the Master borrowed the parables from current literature. To both these suggestions the answer is found in the parables themselves. A comparison between the parables of the New Testament and those of the Rabbis will leave no one in doubt as to the entire dissimilarity of these, in method and in content.

The origin of the parable is lost in antiquity, but we have two in the Old Testament which are representative of the best classical type. Here is the first of these :

And Jehovah sent Nathan unto David, and he came and said unto him, There were two men in a certain town, the one was rich and the other poor. The rich man had a great many cattle and sheep, and the poor man had nothing save a lambkin which he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and his family. It ate from the same loaf as he did, and drank from the same cup, and nestled on his knees, and was just like a daughter to him.

There came a wayfarer to the rich man, and he, being reluctant to take from his own sheep or cattle to entertain the visitor, took the poor man's ewe, and had it prepared for his guest. And David's anger was kindled greatly against the man, and he said, By the living Jehovah, the man is worthy of death for doing such a deed, and he ought to pay fourfold for the lamb, for doing so pitiless

a thing. And Nathan said: You are the man! (2 Sam. xii. 1–7.)

This is the second parable we take:

I will recite to my friend the story of my well-beloved and his vineyard. My well-beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hilltop; And he dug it about, and picked out the stones from it, and planted it with young vines.
He built a watch tower in the midst of it,
And also had a cellar excavated in it.
And he anticipated the production of grapes,
And it produced dried-up husks of grapes.
And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah,
Judge I pray you between me and my vineyard.
What more could I have done to my vineyard which I have left undone?
Why did I anticipate the production of grapes,
And it yielded only husks of grapes?
And now (listen) and I will inform you what I am about to do to my vineyard.
I will remove its hedge, and it shall be turned into pasture land.
I will break down its fences, and it shall be trodden down:
I will make it a waste:
It shall neither be pruned nor cultivated;
And there shall grow in it thorns and briars:
I will also command the clouds to furnish it with no rain whatever.

For the vineyard of Jehovah of Hosts is the House of Israel,
And the men of Judah his pleasant plants;
He looked for judgment, and behold oppression:
For righteousness, and behold a cry. (Isa. v. 1–8.)

Now we know the reason that led to the setting forth of the first parable. David had committed a detestable crime. The prophet comes to lay the charge of the crime on David's soul. How is he to do it? He might go straight to the point and declare to David Jehovah's judgment, but to do so, if it does not actually lose him a hearing altogether, may prejudice his case from the outset. So Nathan tells David a story of what presumably has occurred in the King's dominion, and this makes David the judge of the case. Having obtained judgment, the prophet, in swift phrase, applies it to the King himself.

We notice that Nathan's method of approach eliminated the personal element and allowed David to judge himself impersonally and impartially. Without it, the same good result could hardly have been obtained. The parable was indispensable. Many of our Lord's parables are equally indispensable.

They allowed the unwilling Pharisees and Scribes to judge themselves—this because they failed at first to see that the point of the parable was against them. The parable of the Wicked Husbandmen is a good illustration of this.

The Isaiah parable is of only a slightly different order. It sets forth the story and goes on to make the application at once without waiting for those addressed to do so. Both here and in Nathan's case, the parable gives entrance for a moral lesson to a prejudiced mind. There can be no doubt that the subject-matter of the parables, before they were applied, aided the mind to a proper view-point of the matter under consideration. It is clear from the above considerations that the classical parable was not used to obscure the issues, but, on the contrary, to assist discernment and judgment.

The Style, Form and Meaning of the Parable

From the two examples cited, it will be seen that each parable is divisible into two or three

parts. There is the matter which is used to introduce the lesson; then, second, the lesson itself; and, third, the application of it. In the parables before us the style is crisp and clear. The rich man of our first parable, and Judah and Jerusalem of the second, are each as plain as words can make them.

The form is either prose, as in the case of the Samuel one, or poetry, as in the case of the Isaiah one. Every word and figure of speech is woven carefully into the whole, and every idea has its counterpart in the lesson which it is intended to teach. We must, however, be very clear concerning the relationship between the matter which introduces the lesson and the lesson itself; and also, we must remember that every parable has a background. We shall see that failure to bear this point in mind has been the cause of much misunderstanding of the parables of the New Testament. Jesus did not go about teaching parables for the parabolic method's sake, but in every case He had a definite reason for speaking the parable.

To get at the heart of each parable, the following considerations must guide the mind:

I. What is the background of the parable ?

II. How much of the local colour of the parable is to be taken as mere elaboration, and how much is essential to the essence of the lesson ?

III. What is the pith of the parable, which, as a rule, is stated at the close of the illustrative material and is generally summed up in a single sentence ? If these three principles are carefully applied, it will be found that the lesson of each parable is clear. We are apt at times to lose the balance between the sections of the parable, and to forget that materials used for illustrations are generally existent only in the speaker's mind. An illustration will best serve to bring out the meaning of the principle in question.

Take a very simple case—the parable on Justification, Luke xviii. 9–14. The two men of the parable cannot be said to have been actual persons whom Jesus had noticed in the Temple. The position given to these two in the Temple precluded any one from hearing what each of them said at the same time. Like the Nathan parable, the two persons mentioned exist in His mind for the purpose

of illustrating His meaning. The parties in the parables, however, are created by the speakers, and therefore one must be careful to give each idea its proper value. The Pharisee is brought into the parable and made to speak definitely in order to illustrate the general attitude of his class towards the idea of justification. The same is true of the publican. Having given us the idea regarding their attitudes, Jesus gives His judgment concerning them, and we can only apply the judgment to circumstances of a similar nature. There is a tendency to neglect the illustrative matter as of no importance.

This is to be greatly regretted, remembering that whether drawn from life or created by the mind, for the purpose of illustrating the point in question, these are the parabolist's ideas and figures, and must not be treated as if they mean nothing in the parable.

On the other hand, it is perhaps waste of space to warn the allegorists not to play fast and loose with the subject-matter of the parables, but one cannot help deploring the mischief they have done to the parables by their fantastic and, not infrequently, false

interpretations of the parables and general teaching of Jesus.

The Etymology of the Word 'Parable' and its Proper Use

In this volume I do not propose to enter into critical or textual problems, unless the subject under discussion should demand it for the proper understanding of the parable. I trust to make each parable so plain that even "he who runs may read." The difficulty of saying exactly what a parable is, is not confined to English literature, but is present also in that of the Greeks and of the Hebrews. For example, there is a difference of opinion as to whether certain sections in the New Testament should be included in the parabolic section (Mark iii. 23–30; Luke v. 33–39). The viewpoint as to what is strictly parabolic and what is not depends on the individual's predilection, and no hard-and-fast rule is possible. So far as Hebrew literature is concerned, the Old Testament is the ultimate authority, and, from the examples cited, we cannot be left in any doubt. When it is

remembered that the first parable cited belongs, if not in exact wording, at least in form, to the earliest Hebrew literature, and the second one to the golden period of Hebrew literature, it may be assumed that these form the correct standard and that every parable may be judged by them.

Etymologically, the Greek word 'Paraballō' means to throw beside, to set side by side, and so does not help us very much. Without going into a lengthy discussion on the proper use and English meaning of the word, it may be said that so long as the use of the word 'Parable' is confined to the class of literature herein dealt with, or to any of a similar nature, the term is quite properly used. The case of the Hebrew and cognate Semitic languages is not any clearer than the English. Semitic students have taken the Hebrew word 'Mash-al' to mean parable, when in reality the word, strictly speaking, means proverb. It will be noticed that the two passages cited do not use the word 'Mash-al': the first is not named; the second uses the word 'Shir,' which means recite. It has been translated 'Sing,' but that is misleading; we had no

music in the sense that the word is understood in English. There was, to be sure, instrumental music, but the art of singing was not known in the olden times among the Jews. A sort of monotonous chant took the place of the song, and every prayer and Biblical passage was chanted or intoned. The prophet, like the Dervish of to-day, recited his message in a chant, and the word 'Shir' should be thus understood. The Arabic word 'Meth-al' and the Aramaic 'Met-aal' have the value of proverb, example, or incident. Passages like Ezek. xvi., xvii. 22–25; Prov. ix. 1–6; Isa. xxviii. 23–29, are not, strictly speaking, parables, but belong to the Mashal type of Hebrew literature.

THE PARABLES: THEIR BACKGROUND AND LOCAL SETTING

I

THE FIRST NEW TESTAMENT PARABLE

General Considerations

It is necessary to avoid doing what Kant said of Hume, "He raised more questions than he could answer." And yet most of the parables raise the following questions:

I. The chronological order of the parable, or, in other words, at what time in the ministry was the parable spoken?

II. The version of the parable; is it found in more than one Gospel, and if so, which of the versions are we to accept in the event of substantial disagreement?

III. Why is a parable recorded in one Gospel and not in the others? Or why is it recorded in two of the Gospels and not in the third?

IV. How much of the illustrative matter is to be taken as essential to the understanding of the parable, and how much is to be considered unessential ?

V. How much of the material which explains the parable, and which is obviously the author's, are we to consider as necessary to a right understanding of the parable ?

While we have selected these five points, which enter into the consideration of most of the parables, many other points might be mentioned which need careful attention.

Thus the truth of Kant's charge against Hume becomes true in this connection. Even if a very straightforward answer could be given to each of these questions, time, space and proportion preclude us from doing so. The reader may, however, rest assured that all the points mentioned, and many others not mentioned, have received careful consideration, and the results are embodied in the main treatment of the individual parables.

Mark iii. 20–30	Matt. xii. 22–32	Luke xi. 14–23
And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. And when his friends heard it, they went out to	Then was brought unto him one possessed with a demon, blind and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the dumb man spake and saw. And all	And he was casting out a demon that was dumb. And it came to pass, when the demon was gone out, the dumb man spake; and the

lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself. And the scribes that came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and, By the prince of the demons casteth he out the demons. And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan hath risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. But no one can enter into the house of the strong man, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house. Verily I say unto you, All their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and their blasthe multitudes were amazed, and said, Can this be the son of David? But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This man doth not cast out demons, but by Beelzebub the prince of the demons. And knowing their thoughts he said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: and if Satan casteth out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges. But if I by the Spirit of God cast out demons, then is the kingdom of God come upon you. Or how can one enter into the house of the strong man, and spoil his goods, multitude marvelled. But some of them said, By Beelzebub the prince of the demons casteth he out demons. And others, trying him, sought of him a sign from heaven. But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth. And if Satan also is divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out demons by Beelzebub. And if I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges. But if I by the finger of God cast out demons, then is the kingdom of God come upon you. When the strong man fully armed guardeth his own court, his goods are

phemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme; but whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin: because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.

except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house. He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth. Therefore I say unto you, Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come.

in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him his whole armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils. He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.

LUKE xii. 10

And everyone who shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Spirit it shall not be forgiven.

While we determined to avoid all critical points, one must be considered here, if we are to get at the teaching of this parable. What was the duration of the ministry of the Master? While there is still no agreed period, the extremes of one year and three years have been abandoned by most N.T. students, and eighteen months to two years are considered as most fitting the facts. The Synoptists,

however, especially Matthew and Mark, do not allow any expansion of the duration beyond the one year. The difficulty which we have to face is, how to account for such violent opposition from the authorities in so short a time as is allowed in Mark's narrative by the position of our parable ? If we take the parable in the setting that Matthew or Luke gives it, it becomes easier to understand, for more time is allowed for the opposition to develop.

The coming down of the Scribes from Judæa to discredit the work of the Master, when taken in conjunction with the incident related in John ix., enables us to see the methods of the authorities. Having failed to make the man who was healed of his blindness disown the work of the Master, having been just as unsuccessful with his parents, and not being able to convict Jesus of sin, they sought to destroy Him. In Galilee the authorities had not the right of life and death, nor yet had they quite such a ready tool in Herod II. as they found in Pilate ; their sole authority in Galilee was that which the people yielded them as the ecclesiastical leaders of the nation. This authority they now sought to make use of, and sent down the Scribes and Pharisees to use it to the full against the Master.

There is something in our human nature

that is hard, terrible and relentless. It stops at nothing ; lying or murder will not prevent men from attaining their end. Only those who have experience of life know how bitter and terrible this temper is. I speak of this characteristic as I found it in Judaism. The Jew can be unscrupulously relentless, especially in his religion. What will not yield must, one way or other, be broken.

From this time onward Jesus had to contend with the extreme of Jewish relentlessness, and in the end it made Him drink the cup to the very dregs.

Matters had been forced to an issue by the acts of mercy the Master was performing. So long as He preached and taught by word of mouth, the authorities did not deem it necessary to oppose Him. They reckoned that they themselves were sitting in the seats of Moses and the prophets, and the people agreed that this was the case ; and even the Master Himself did so. They were the norm of correct teaching, and they could, by reason of their authority, say who taught aright and who did not. Up to a point, the teaching of Jesus was within the bounds of Rabbinism, but He was beginning to depart from the usual method by setting His own teaching against that of the O.T. " It has been said to you of

old, but I say unto you." This was rank liberalism, but even that did not cause them very great anxiety. They still could, and did, claim that they alone were the source of authority, and whatever did not agree with their teaching was wrong. The people as a whole would follow them rather than any newcomer.

Action was, however, a very different matter. When Jesus began His ministry of healing they felt that they must act or lose their hold on the people. Their claim to authority might be accepted by the people so far as theory was concerned, but their viewpoint concerning Jesus might not be so easily accepted once the influence of His work was felt. They resorted, therefore, to this method of discrediting Him: "He is in league with Satan, and it is by the power of Satan that He does these feats of healing," they said.

It will be noticed that Mark gives no reason for the conflict. He introduces the Scribes in a very abrupt sentence. Matthew gives the reason of the charge of the Scribes as the healing of a demoniac who was blind and dumb. Luke says, "He was casting out a demon that was dumb."

The subject-matter of the parable is quite

clear ; it is an answer to the charge that He was in league with Satan.

The answer is made up of two negatives and one positive.

(*a*) They agreed that all disease was the result of sin, and therefore the work of Satan. Jesus said, if He were in league with Satan, He would not be undoing the work of Satan.

(*b*) A principle, whether it is held by a community or individual, cannot maintain itself on division. The allusion is to the family. Tribal feuds made it impossible for any family to continue to exist, unless it lived in unity. If a brother, or cousin, or the most distant relative be wronged, or killed, it becomes the duty of every member of the family to avenge his relative, not only upon the actual offender, but upon any of his relations. This being the case, it is quite evident how very important the unity of the family was for its very existence. But need we go to the East to learn how valuable unity in the family is ? The person who is denied this is denied one of the precious things in life. The principle of unity, then, Jesus argues, is essential to existence, and unless evil has some unifying principle it will disintegrate.

(*c*) The third factor in the parable is positive. If the two foregoing propositions are right,

and I am not working in league with Satan, I must be working against him, and if I am working against him, undoing his work, I must be stronger than he, for no one can despoil a person of his property unless he be stronger than the deprived person. Every person will put up a fight for his belongings, and will only allow them to be taken when he cannot help himself.

These very logical propositions are a complete vindication of Jesus' work, by pure reasoning, and we can add nothing to them. Had the authorities, and the Scribes whom they sent down to discredit Him, wished to see the truth, they had ample opportunity of doing so. But the fact is that they did not wish to see. They were determined to oppose Him, come what might.

In spite of their wilful defamation, He goes on, in His loving and patient manner, to warn them of the consequences of their self-imposed blindness.

The Application

The conclusion of the parable, which is supplemented in the section from John's Gospel indicated above, is a grave warning to the Jewish leaders against carrying on this campaign of malicious lying.

The closing verses in Matthew and Mark teach us an additional lesson which we must take time to consider. The Matthew passage is specially important in this connection.

The Master was not asking freedom from criticism. He alone is afraid of criticism whose words, work, or life cannot stand the test of truth. It is not possible, or desirable, in the nature of things that Christ should be free from honest criticism, and we have the assurance of the Master Himself that such criticism, even though mistaken, is pardonable. But the Scribes' criticism was not honest, and this dishonesty the Master describes as "sin against the Holy Spirit," or rather "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit." So far as the parable goes, there is nothing in it to suggest that the Holy Spirit has even been mentioned, and even had it been mentioned, it is doubtful if His hearers would have understood by it what we do. Indeed it is very difficult to say what the words, 'Ru-ach Ha-kod-esh' (Holy Spirit), would convey to the minds of the Scribes. As a Jew, when I read the N.T. for the first time, the words 'Holy Spirit' conveyed no particular meaning. I knew the words in Ps. li. 14, but I understood them to mean the Spirit of God's Holiness, just as Zion was the Mountain of His Holiness.

The Spirit of God was in Jewish thought an attribute of God, just as love, pity and mercy are attributes. This Spirit was, however, considered as the special attribute by which the prophets received their message, and the heavenly light illumined the human mind. To sin against it, then, was to sin against the light of the mind which God gave the creature. The closing words of John ix. 41, "Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye would have no sin: but now ye say, We see: your sin remaineth," are the best comment on this section. It is sad to think of men who put themselves beyond the forgiveness of God. Let us be quite clear on this matter. Self-imposed blindness brings about a state of things in which forgiveness becomes impossible: not that God ceases to be forgiving, but the person who will not see shuts out the light of God, which is essential to the acceptance of forgiveness, and thus leaves no avenue by means of which the sense of forgiveness may reach him.

If our parable is the first N.T. parable, it throws a good deal of light on the reason for the Master's adoption of the parabolic method. Further teaching in plain and direct language could have but little effect upon His opponents. The only way to penetrate their prejudices

was to eliminate the personal equation, and the parable was best fitted for achieving that purpose.

We cannot leave this parable without saying a word on Mark iii. 21. The words 'hoi par autou' have been variously interpreted. By Schöttgen, Wolf, Greisbach, Vater, Krebe and many others, the words are taken to indicate the disciples, and they make the remark about Him because He was neglecting to take His food. Most modern students take the words as representing His relations, and, in spite of the difficulties this matter raises if His mother was among the relatives, I cannot bring myself to adopt any fanciful interpretation to solve my difficulties. The ministry of the Master, as well as His death, could not but impress the minds of many as being out of the ordinary, and if His own folk were amongst them, I am not in the least surprised. I have heard my own mother explain my strange behaviour of believing in Jesus as an active form of madness.

II

THE PARABLE OF THE SOILS

The authorities having determined to do what lay in their power to oppose Him, Jesus was faced with a problem which must have taxed the genius of the greatest of teachers. How was He to keep His friends informed of the true nature of His work? It must be borne in mind that those who formed the little band of disciples came to Him with preconceived ideas of what He ought to be and do, if He was the Messiah. To tell them that what they were taught by the authorities to expect of the Messiah was incorrect would have only helped to make them think that He could not be the Messiah. His task now, since the conflict with the authorities was begun, was to train these simple folk to take a spiritual view of the Messianic office and function. To that end the parables of the following group were spoken.

MARK iv. 3–9

Hearken: Behold, the sower went forth to sow: and it came to pass, as he sowed, some seed fell by the way side, and the birds came and devoured it. And other fell on the rocky ground, where it had not much earth; and straightway it sprang up, because it had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. And other fell among the thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And others fell into the good ground, and yielded fruit, growing up and increasing; and brought forth, thirtyfold, and sixtyfold, and a hundredfold. And he said, Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

MATT. xiii. 3–9

And he spake to them many things in parables, saying, Behold, the sower went forth to sow; and as he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the birds came and devoured them: and others fell upon the rocky places, where they had not much earth: and straightway they sprang up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And others fell upon the thorns; and the thorns grew up, and choked them: and others fell upon the good ground, and yielded fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He that hath ears, let him hear.

LUKE viii. 5–8

The sower went forth to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden under foot, and the birds of heaven devoured it. And other fell on the rock; and as soon as it grew, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And other fell amidst the thorns; and the thorns grew with it, and choked it. And other fell into the good ground, and grew, and brought forth fruit an hundredfold. As he said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Local Setting

The geographical, geological and botanical aspects of Palestine are beyond the scope of this work. But a few remarks may facilitate the understanding of the setting of this parable.

The Synoptists agree that the parable was spoken from a boat on the shore of the Lake of Galilee. It is reasonably safe to assume that this was on the north-east side of the Lake, somewhere between Capernaum and Bethsaida. Those who have seen the district will recognize the soils alluded to as those of the adjacent countryside.

The ground on the north-east side of the Lake is at least six hundred feet below the level of the Mediterranean, and at one time it must have been completely under water. It is situated at the extremity of a volcanic range, at one time in very active eruption. These factors give peculiar geological strata to the soil, which is very fertile in spots where the lava settled upon the limestone foundation, and very barren in places where the water-shed bared the rock. In the same field may be found a deep rich soil, a gravel soil, and bare rocky patches.

Of the prickly plants which infest the land only a few need be mentioned ; the Nubek or Jujube (*Zizyphus spinachriste*) is very common, so are also the thistles (*Centaurea calcitraps* and *Palinrus aculeatus*, Christ's thorns). Some of these cannot be eradicated easily, and are left to grow in the field.

The sowing of wheat takes place during the months of December and January. The sower carries a bag of wheat tied to his shoulder and round his waist, to the mouth of which he has easy access. From this bag he withdraws his seed and scatters it over the field. It is, of course, inevitable that some of the seed should fall on the very shallow ground, among the thorns, or on the roadside in the field.

While it is, as a rule, fairly cold in Palestine during the sowing season, the Lake district is warmer than other parts, and during the sowing season it is even oppressively warm. Seed falling upon shallow ground germinates quickly, but the strong sun parches such growth, as it is lacking in moisture.

All the conditions of growth with which the people of the countryside were familiar are given their value and place in the parable.

The Background

The question we must ask is, Why did Jesus teach the parable at all ? What did He wish to convey to His hearers by it ? His conflicts with the authorities having begun, His position and the true meaning of His office had to be clarified in the minds of the little band of followers, and this parable is the first step in that direction.

The disciples came to Him because of their belief that He was the Messiah. Though many students of the N.T. hold that Jesus did not consider Himself the Messiah until a certain stage was reached in His ministry, this opinion is far from proved. The question of the Messianic consciousness of Jesus cannot be said to have reached a stage that can be accepted as a working hypothesis.

The question that we must seek an answer for is, What were the disciples' views of the person and office of the Messiah ? Without going into details or lengthy quotations, the answer may be stated as follows :

The basis of the Messianic ideal lies in the O.T. During the inter-testamental period much was added to the O.T. conception, and by the time of Jesus it was held that the

Messiah was to be a hero-king who would establish a kingdom in which Israel would be the predominant factor; and further that, alongside the political dominance of Israel, there would come to exist a sinless humanity, ruled by the Will of God and guided by His laws. It was a curious mixture of a politico-spiritual reign of God, through the person of the Messiah. The disciples shared these beliefs in every respect. Jesus' office and mission were very different from the current conception. He required to make this evident to the disciples, and, to achieve that purpose, He related the parable under consideration. That the disciples did not understand the import of the parable is not to be wondered at. It would have been marvellous had they done so. But keeping in mind the background of the Messianic ideal, as the disciples held it, we can go on to examine the lesson. The question of the time of the explanation of the parable need not detain us here. For our purpose it makes no difference when it was given, though it is noteworthy that the Synoptics all record it.

The Soils when transferred to the spiritual sphere are the hearts of mankind. The sower is Jesus. The seed is the word of God.

The causes which militate against growth

are Satan, and human lusts, cares and deceits. These things make the heart barren, fruitless and ineffective. Not a single word can be added to the lucid explanation of the matchless Teacher's own words.

The Application

From the illustration and explanation, the application is not difficult to make. Holman Hunt's picture of "The Master at the Door," goes to the heart of the lesson. The human heart is a closed door, which can be opened from within only. The disciples of Jesus were plain folk and they required plain teaching. Jesus tells them by means of the parable that their conception of the office and function of the Messiah is erroneous. He will not force Himself into the hearts of people. Further, His ministry is not to be the unqualified success which they had been led to think it would be. It is, indeed, to be a partial failure, and it cannot be otherwise unless God abrogates the right given to man of freedom of will. The Messiah's function is that of casting abroad the seed; always it is good seed; but in certain soils it will not grow at all, and only in the best soil will it yield a hundred-fold. This was the seed-thought planted thus early

in the disciples' minds—a thought not to yield fruit for many days, but destined to make all things new for them, and for the world.

Is there not a lesson for us also in this very parable? Who had a better right to success than our Master? Who had a message like His? Yet He knew that the human heart was not to be taken by storm, nor yet captured by oratory. It is enough for the servant to be as the Master. Since it has pleased God to create a domain into which He cannot enter save by invitation, let us not think of forcing it, lest by so doing we fall into the error of the Jews, that God will establish Himself in the human heart by physical or moral force. His method is not force, but pleading, self-sacrifice and love, and by the application of these, and these alone, can we hope to be doing the Master's work, with the added hope that His suffering, death and resurrection will be as new soil brought down from the towering mountains of God's love to the barren and stony heart of man, that it may become fruitful in all good work and abound.

III

THE MYSTERY OF GROWTH

MARK iv. 26–29

And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth; and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, he knoweth not how. The earth beareth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear, But when the fruit is ripe, straightway he putteth forth the sickle, because the harvest is come.

THE parable of the Soils is followed in Mark by this one under consideration, and in Matthew by the parable on Extraneous Growth. It is generally agreed that Luke had before him, when he compiled his Gospel, the MSS. of Mark and Matthew, either in their present forms or in earlier ones (these earlier forms are spoken of as Q and Ur Mark). The student of the parables is thus confronted with the following questions:

I. Why did Luke omit both the Matthæan and Marcan parables?

II. Why did Matthew omit the parable on the Mystery of Growth?

III. Why did Mark omit the parable on Extraneous Growth ?

To the first question no explanation has been given by any commentator. To the second and third questions a very ingenious solution has been offered. It is, that the parables are really the same parable differently worded. One only needs to read the parables to find how unsatisfactory this answer is. Those who believe that both the Marcan and Matthæan parables were spoken by Jesus find it difficult to understand why each of our authors recorded only one of the parables. A possible explanation is, that each of the authors, finding the others recording the parable, deemed it unnecessary to insert it. But this is contrary to the methods actually pursued by the various writers. To cite only one instance, the parable of the Soils is recorded by all the Synoptists. Had this principle of omission been acted on, each of our synoptic Gospels would contain at least one-third less material than they actually do. The fact is, that both the parables of Matthew and Mark are either an elaboration of the parable of the Soils or an explanation of some points in it.

The answer to the first question, then, would seem to be that, as Luke had before him, in

writing, the parable of the Soils as well as the Master's answer, he was unable to grasp the difficulty which had been raised in the minds of the disciples, and he accordingly omitted the explanatory parables.

As Matthew and Mark were recording what they had heard, or what was dictated by those who had heard the parables, they were well aware of the difficulties which had been raised in the minds of Christ's listeners.

Matthew or Q, we are told, wrote his Gospel for Palestinian Jews, who would feel the same difficulty that the disciples themselves felt, and this difficulty the Master sought to solve by speaking the parable which Matthew records.

The Messiah casts His seed upon the different soils. Some of it brings forth fruit, but not all of that is good fruit. (Judas and a good many apostates of the early Church would rise up before the mind.) The parable is given to show that this seed was not of Christ's planting but Satan's, and that things will be adjusted, in the end, by the angels.

Mark, who wrote down his memoirs at the dictation of Peter, or recorded Peter's discourses about the years 60–65 A.D., had a different problem to solve. The seed of the Kingdom was spreading. It was springing up

in the very soil of Imperial Rome. What about the parable of the Soils which teaches partial failure? The answer is in the parable of the Mystery of Growth. The Kingdom is God's, and it is going to come, though it will take long in coming. He has endowed it with the inherent qualities of growth, and in due course the harvest will be reaped.

The foregoing explanations are in answer to the questions why the authors of our Gospels selected the material they use. They are the Master's reasons for speaking the parables themselves, but we must not exclude the possibility that the Master, while answering questions which had arisen in the minds of the disciples, might have had in view just the very situation which the authors had to face, and spoke His parables, not only to meet the immediate difficulty, but the difficulties of all ages.

We must now turn to the lesson He sought to convey to His hearers at the time He spoke the parables.

In spite of the full explanation given them by the Master, the disciples did not grasp adequately the inner meaning of the parable of the Soils; yet what they did understand of it must have disquieted them. To remove, or at least lighten, their difficulties, the Master

added the parable under consideration, and the one which follows it. I put myself in the place of the disciples, and it seems to me that the teaching of the parable of the Soils would leave me wondering what then is to be the course of the Kingdom. God does not force Himself into the human heart. The catastrophic inauguration of the Kingdom is not to occur, and even growth is to be looked for only in a very limited part of the Soil. It seemed to be a hopeless affair so far as the disciples themselves were concerned. So the Master goes on to emphasize the point already made, at the same time explaining to them the factor which will ensure growth.

It is hardly necessary that we should enter here on a discussion of the processes of agriculture which assist growth. No doubt Jesus was aware of the various steps the farmer took to ensure a good crop. As a carpenter He would be cognizant of all the "field work," for He would have to supply material for the various stages, to a much greater degree than is now the case in the West. No type of working man comes more into contact with the various phases of human activities, be it in the home, shop or field, than does the Eastern carpenter. All the requisite necessities of the community, in one way or another, go through his hands.

Was it because of this universal contact that the Son of Man was a carpenter ?

The Need for Faith and Patience in the Kingdom

The Master continues His illustration in the realm of agriculture. Taking the Soil, plus the man who works it, He points out how the farmer obtains his crop. He sows the seed in faith and awaits results. His faith and patience are rewarded by the appearance of first the blade, then the ear, and lastly the full corn in the ear. The wheat, having attained maturity, is harvested. The mention of the 'sickle' has occasioned some very wild theorizing on the part of some Church fathers and even of modern commentators. The remark, so far as the narrative goes, is merely a question of the idiom which is necessary for the completion of the figure of speech. When the figure of speech is transferred into the spiritual realm, its meaning is clear : Jesus as the sower of the Word has to wait patiently for the ultimate result. We need to learn the lesson of this parable very thoroughly if we are to benefit by its wisdom and profit by its clarity. Jesus had faith in the Kingdom He was planting for the Father. He recognized

certain limitations to which He had to submit, if order and not chaos was to regulate the growth of the Kingdom ; and we must realize this factor too, if the Kingdom is to benefit by our adherence to it.

So far as the disciples were concerned, the parable seems to have gone a long way in helping to solve their difficulties. Their Master had implicit faith that the seed He was sowing would ultimately come to full fruition, and His faith assisted theirs. Thus the first thought in the parable of the Soils is supplemented by a profound truth, the pith of which is the confidence of the sower in the wise providence of God, that everything concerning the Kingdom is conceived, planned and realized with unerring judgment. The Church would do well to take the lesson to heart and do its sowing with humble, undisturbed confidence.

Let us benefit by the wisdom which guided our author to preserve this valuable parable. The author had faced the situation depicted in the parable of the Soils. Jesus went to the Cross alone. His work seemed not only a partial, but a complete failure. But when the dark hours during which He hung on the Cross were over, and the seals on the tomb were broken, and the Risen Lord stood in

their midst, failure ceased to have meaning for them. When our Gospel was being written, the parable of the Soils must have lost all its original meaning for the writer. Asia, Europe and Africa were beginning to produce fruit for the Kingdom. The words of the Master came back to the writer, and he recorded them for the benefit of those who read the Gospel in his time, and for us. We should take courage, and never despair. The Kingdom is of God's planting, and it may seem to us that He is quiescent, but His apparent inactivity is required by the nature of things. The seed is growing quietly but surely, and in the end the harvest will come. The Church must go on in faith doing her part, not despairing if the growth is slow. We have passed beyond the ear and the blade stages. We are living in times when the full grain is coming to fruition. Let us pray the Lord of the harvest to command us to go forth to the reaping.

IV

EXTRANEOUS GROWTH

MATT. xiii. 24–30

Another parable set he before them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man that sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went away. But when the blade sprang up and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. And the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? whence, then, hath it tares? And he said unto them, An enemy hath done this. And the servants say unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he saith, Nay; lest haply while ye gather up the tares, ye root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest:

MATT. xiii. 36–43

Then he left the multitudes, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Explain unto us the parable of the tares of the field. And he answered and said, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; and the field is the world; and the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; and the enemy that sowed them is the devil: and the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are angels. As therefore the tares are gathered up and burned with fire; so shall it be in the end of the world. The Son of man shall send forthwith his angels and they gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into the

and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather up first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

furnace of fire: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He that hath ears, let him hear.

We come to the last of the first set of parables, the illustrative material of which is all drawn from the same source—the culture of wheat. The lesson which the Master seeks now to set forward is complementary to the foregoing parables and completes the survey of the human heart, in so far as it is related to the Kingdom. If the parable of the Soils had astounded the disciples, and the mystery of growth had made them feel their own helplessness in hastening the acceptance of the principles of the Kingdom, this last parable must have perplexed them. It sets forth, not only the presence of extraneous growth in the Kingdom, but also the eschatological aspect of the Kingdom itself.

So far as the local colour is concerned, no difficulty is presented. Darnel is a very troublesome weed which occurs in the wheat fields of Palestine. Women have to be hired to pick it out from the seed which is to be milled, and very careful farmers will even have it picked out from the wheat which is to

be used for seed. As a rule, the separation of the darnel from the wheat is done after the threshing. By spreading the grain out on a large tray which is set before the women, they are able to pick out the darnel, which is a seedling similar in shape and size to wheat, but slate-grey in colour. I have known flocks of thriving farmyard fowls which were entirely fed on darnel.

The Background

The background of the parable is still to be found in the desire of Jesus to make the governing principles of the Kingdom known to the disciples and the multitude, and to disabuse their minds of the catastrophic viewpoint of their traditional Messianism.

By this time the disciples had begun to appreciate the value of the parabolic method, and they came asking for the application of it in the spiritual realm. The explanation is given very fully, and nothing is left in doubt. We need hardly ask why Jesus made apparent so early to the disciples that there is to be extraneous growth in the Kingdom; His purpose was to prepare their minds for what was to come.

The matter under consideration was, How

would the Messianic era be established? He had come into conflict with the authorities, and He was not to fulfil their expectation or interpretation of the Messianic idea. The parable of the Soil had made the main issue clear. The Kingdom He was concerned with was the human heart, and owing to manifold influences at work, only a very limited part of this soil would bear fruit. The second parable warned them of the limitations of the power to force or hasten growth: they must have faith and patience. Yet a third consideration must be taken into account. The fruitful soil is not going to produce good fruit and nothing else. Evil coexists with good, and it also produces fruit. True, the good seed does not bring forth evil fruit; the darnel is sown *amongst* the wheat; and while the growth is still in progress these must not be separated.

The problem as to Church authority does not arise from this parable; it is dealt with in the parable of the Drag-Net. Here the labourers ask explicitly for permission to act as the separators, and are told explicitly that the function is not for them; it is a matter to which the Lord of the harvest will attend, in His own good time.

The eschatological aspect of the parable is

not an afterthought, but part of the essence of the lesson of the parable, which gives it universal value and makes it as true for us as it was for the disciples themselves.

We thus have in this wonderful set of parables the complete range of Jesus' conception of the working out of His Kingdom in time, and its realization in eternity.

I. His Kingdom is to be sown in gentleness.

II. Though its growth is imperceptible, it is, nevertheless, making progress, and under God will come to full fruition.

III. When it has reached maturity, it will be purged from extraneous growth by the angels of God.

With such explicit teaching concerning the Kingdom, the Church, if it remains steadfast, can never grow pessimistic, but will work on till God's time comes and her faith and patience are rewarded.

V

EXTENSION OF THE KINGDOM

THE DIVINE SIDE

MATT. xiii. 31–32

Another parable set he before them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is less than all seeds; but when it is grown, it is greater than the herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the heaven come and lodge in the branches thereof.

MARK iv. 30–32

And he said, To what shall we liken the kingdom of God? or in what parable shall we set it forth? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, before it is sown upon the earth, though it be less than all the seeds that are upon the earth, yet when it is sown, groweth up, and becometh greater than all the herbs, and putteth out great branches; so that the birds of the heaven can lodge under the shadow thereof.

LUKE xiii. 18–19

He said therefore, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I liken it? It is like unto a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast it into his own garden; and it grew, and became a tree; and the birds of the heaven lodged in the branches thereof.

THE difficulty of chronology, so far as the parables are concerned, becomes evident at this early stage. It will appear from the

list given that French, Swete, Edersheim and Andrews follow the Matthæan order, while Bruce puts the parables of possession first, and then these two. No satisfactory reason is given for the reversal of the Matthæan order. While in St. Mark only the parable of the Mustard Seed is given, and it follows the Matthæan order, St. Luke gives our two parables, but in an entirely different connection. We have to make our choice as to which order we are to follow. It has been pointed out that one of the necessary aids to the understanding of a parable is the background of the parable. If we accept St. Luke's order, there seems no background for these two parables.

The Local Setting

The exact nature of the plant mentioned in our parable is not very clear. The Greek is 'Sinapu' which means 'mustard,' though the classic Greek for mustard is 'Napu.' While, generally speaking, the mustard plants are botanically described as *Brasscia nigra* (black mustard), *Brasscia arvensis* (charlock) and *Brasscia alba* (white mustard), many botanists class them in the genus *Sinapis*. The *Sinapis* genus is native to Europe, Asia and

North Africa. It is from one to four feet in height and not very leafy. It can hardly be said to be a tree, and would not, because of its strong-smelling seed, be a very inviting plant for birds. The 'Sin-ap-eaus' of our parable has been identified with two plants —namely, the *Salvadora persica* and *Sinapis nigra*. I cannot say that I know either of these plants to be native to Galilee. The *Salvadora persica* is, however, found near the Dead Sea, and Irby and Mangless (two travellers in the East interested in Biblical botany) identified the 'Sin-ap-eaus' with *Salvadora persica*. The identification of the plant does not matter so far as the lesson of the parables goes, for it is quite clear that the intention of the Master is to show that a small seed becomes a large plant, and the Kingdom is to take the same course. The question of the application of the parable is a matter on which there is great diversity of opinion. We are asked by some students of the N.T. to believe that Jesus did not foresee the growth of His little band into an innumerable host—an organization which would comprise people from all parts of the earth—a society which would encircle the globe.

Accordingly it is argued that Jesus did not use the words of the parable at all. But this

argument does not relieve the situation. It only puts the difficulty back a step. Some one used the parable, which means that some one had faith in the development of the Kingdom.

History bears witness that there is a prophecy here which has been in course of fulfilment for two thousand years, and those of us who come to the N.T. with a simple and childlike faith believe that it requires time only till the faith of the parable shall be fully and completely vindicated. In plain language the parable sets forth the thesis that the Kingdom is of God's planting, that its very small beginning is to be accepted as a matter of course, and that God will in His own way and time bring the small seedling into full fruition, and that men of every nation and clime will find shelter in it. Let history and the honest judgment of men and women say if this prophecy is not being fulfilled. If Q, Matthew, Mark or Luke gave utterance to the parable and not Jesus, it is obvious from what source they derived their faith.

VI

EXTENSION OF THE KINGDOM

THE HUMAN SIDE

MATT. xiii. 33

Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened.

LUKE xiii. 20–21

And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like unto leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened.

TURNING from the Divine planting of the Kingdom to the Human side of it, a parable, simple, universal and far-reaching, is used.

THE LOCAL SETTING

The use of leaven was universal in the Master's time, and in the Near East it is so yet. The composition of leaven is very simple. A piece of dough is left over from the last baking and the exposure induces certain chemical changes which enable the dough to effect fermenting and transforming actions on large quantities of flour. The actual effect of the

leaven, chemically speaking, is to modify. The leaven does not change the quantity but the quality of the article into which it is introduced.

In Europe the dough leaven is replaced by yeast, and the action of yeast differs somewhat from that of leaven. The chemical action of yeast was first explained scientifically by Leuwenhoeck about 1680, and further elaborated upon by Pasteur in 1857. According to the combined findings of the aforementioned and most chemists, yeast is a fungi of the genus *Saccharomyus*. Its chemical function is the setting up of alcoholic fermentation, the result of which is carbon dioxide, and its influence upon the article into which it is introduced is to change the values in its composition.

The leaven assumed in our parable would be about three to five ounces in weight ; the quantity of meal would equal about five pecks in English measure. This would form the ordinary amount of a baking for an average family. The parable would bring its lesson home very readily because of the familiarity of the people with the process. The special object the parable has in view is the human agency in the transformation of the world. As the small piece of leaven transforms the

large quantity of flour, so will the action of the members of the Kingdom transform the world. It is not necessary to build up an elaborate argument showing cause why the parable of the Mustard Seed is deemed to be the Divine side of the extension, and the leaven the Human side. It is enough that, in the case of the mustard seed, it is a question of the planting, in which the generation and genesis of the Kingdom are concerned, and its birth and growth cannot be said to belong to the human sphere. The influences which do, as a matter of fact, make or mar, hasten or retard the coming of the Kingdom, are the human agencies.

History again comes to our aid in proving how very true the parable has been to life, and contemporary literature proves how the leaven is working. To select only a few contemporary writers of note who are not professing Christians, we find in Judaism men like the late Professor Abrahams of Cambridge and Dr. C. G. Montefiore, permeated with the leaven of the Kingdom. In India the brothers Ali as representatives of Islam, and Rabindranath Tagore as representative of Hinduism, show in every page of their writings the transformation which Christianity is effecting in the world.

The great prophet of Arabia himself shows it and bears manly testimony to it. The monks of Syria with whom he seems to have come in contact had introduced the leaven, and I make bold to say that, with a reign of reason and goodwill, the two monotheistic religious communities of Islam and Israel will come to rest on the tree of God's planting.

The two parables teach then the lessons of the planting and diffusing of the Kingdom, and both of them have history as their attestation.

We must now go back to the question of the background of the parables. While it is quite possible to make a fetish of it, and one must guard against that, the value which a clear background adds to the understanding of the parable makes it desirable to obtain it whenever possible.

If the Matthæan and Marcan order is the correct one, then the background is to be found in the thoughts of the disciples. The Master would sense the confusion which the first set of parables had created in the minds of the little band. Almost certainly they would raise the question in the minds of the disciples, " Why are we here ? What object is there in our attachment to Him ? " The answer is found in our two parables.

It is as though Jesus said: "I have been dealing with one phase of the Kingdom, but there is another side, and the other side is, that the Kingdom is God's and He gives you your part in it. You have to transform the world with your leaven." It is not necessary to set forth any opinion as to what the leaven of Christianity is, for while there are differences of opinion as to the means, the end is the realization of the ideals of Jesus. They alone, as manifested in word and deed, are capable of transforming the values of this World's ideas, longings and hopes. These parables were spoken by the Master after the three dealing with the Sowing, Growing and the mystery of Growth. The disciples must not be discouraged, but must rather have faith in God's planting of the Kingdom, and do their share faithfully. If this view is the proper one, the background is clear, the illustrative material forceful and to the point, and the application justified by history and daily justifying itself.

Further, they form a strong introduction to the parables which follow on how men become possessors of the Kingdom. I am strongly inclined to the Matthæan order of the eight parables as being the order in which they were spoken. Mark remarks: "And with many

such parables spake He the word unto them, as they were able to hear it " (Mark iv. 33). This lends support and adds authority to the logic of the progressive order of thought and exposition.

VII

METHODS OF BECOMING POSSESSORS OF THE KINGDOM

MATT. xiii. 44–51

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in the field; which a man found, and hid; and in his joy he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a merchant seeking goodly pearls: who, having found one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind; which, when it was filled, they drew up on the beach; and they sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, and the bad they cast away. So shall it be in the end of the world; the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the righteous, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

WE have in this series of parables another cycle which, complete in itself, sets forth an ordered and progressive theory of how men become possessors of the Kingdom. This cycle is peculiar to Matthew, and it is not easy to say just at what stage in the ministry they were set forth. The arrangement of the first

Gospel seems, however, not to be so haphazard as some would have us think it is. There is logical sequence in the thought, and one is inclined to think that we have in the thirteenth chapter the way in which these parables were originally delivered. Having explained to the disciples various considerations in connection with the human factors, as well as the natural elements that affect the coming of the Kingdom, Jesus turns to the methods by which the Kingdom becomes man's heritage. Three methods are set forth. The first is that of the individual who, in the course of his duties, happens upon the Kingdom. Coming unexpectedly upon the Kingdom, the finder of it leaves every other consideration aside, and makes it the chief object of his mind.

That the truth of the parable corresponds with what we find in everyday experience need hardly be pointed out. Some people come across great truths by the merest chance, but once the truth grips them, they give their all for it. When we think of the great founders of thought, this parable comes home with force. Take Sir Isaac Newton. He made contributions of a very valuable nature to many departments of thought, but there is no doubt that his gravitation studies have made his name known everywhere. And this,

we are told, came to him by chance. Of course chance had nothing to do with the theory. Unless there had been the mind there to appreciate the lesson that the falling apple was teaching, there could not have been the great discovery. Countless apples had fallen to the ground previously, but there were no Newtons there to penetrate the secret. When we think of it, a great many of the most valuable possessions of humanity have come to us in the manner described in our parable. But it must be borne in mind that what people call " chance " is not what is meant here, for it requires mind to take advantage of the occasion.

A question of purely theoretic nature may be raised in the minds of many when studying this parable. It may be asked, " Is it good for a person to give up everything in order to acquire just one thing ? " No dogmatic answer can be given to that question ; but certainly history teaches that the most successful people are those who set their minds in one direction and pursue one idea to its ultimate end, in so far as man's mind is capable of doing so. This is becoming more necessary in our own day, when every effort requires specialization if success is to attend it. And this is essentially true where the

Kingdom of God is concerned. Man's way of getting at it has been to do here a little and there a little, but Jesus tells us that only by setting aside every other consideration will we attain to full possession of the Kingdom. Personally, I have not the shadow of a doubt that humanity will be driven to reach the same conclusion, but in its own clumsy and expensive way.

The Seeker after the Kingdom

From the man who, as it were, stumbles upon the idea of the Kingdom, the Master passes on to the individual who sets out to find it. Some one has remarked that "Man is essentially a religious being." He is, but his religious choice is often not very wise. I would be the last man to say anything derogatory of the non-Christian systems. Having been brought up as a Jew, I retain the respect that I gained of its good points. Having come into daily contact with a Mohammedan population, I learned to respect many of them, and honour others for their sincerity and the honesty of their endeavour to lead a godly life. One has observed in India the good in the systems held by its folk. Yet, if a man sets out with the purpose of getting the

highest good in life, he must come to the Man of Nazareth. This is the lesson of the second parable of the cycle. The seeker, representative of the type, differs from the last one discussed, in that he deliberately sets out to find the most precious thing in life. He had learned the truth of another saying, " Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and its righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Life becomes a spring of joy when the desires of the mind are satisfied. This is especially true of those who come into possession of the highest good of life ; when that is obtained nothing else matters, nothing else can compare in value with it. It satisfies all the longings of our better self, and it is worth all else. If we carry the thought back in the material realm, we know that the owner of the one pearl may find to his undoing that the wonderful pearl has been stolen, or in some way or other has lost value. No such loss can befall the finder of the Kingdom. His treasure is laid up where no thief can break through to steal and where no rust can corrupt. Again, the question arises of the wisdom of giving up all to get one thing, and the judgment of Jesus, Who had Himself done this, is that it is well worth while. It does not mean that every one of us can do that, nor

that it is at all likely that very many will do it, but it simply sets forth the type that will do it, and how it will fare. The parables are masterpieces in plainness, and need no further comment.

The Mass and the Kingdom

The people who come into possession of the Kingdom, either by special providence or special endeavour, must in the nature of things be but few. If we only had the two former parables we naturally would have asked, What about the generality of humanity? The Master anticipates, and answers this question in our parable.

He compares humanity to the sea, a metaphor which would specially appeal to those of His disciples who were engaged in fishing before their call; though the others would appreciate the form of speech because of its simplicity.

One thinks of the words used when the four fishermen were called, "Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men."

There is a great difference between those who find the Kingdom and keep it to themselves and those who find and impart its treasures to others. Their vocation needs

great care and toil, and, if one may put it, much grace. But, further, successful fishing when done for commercial purposes depends on the whole crew, on the boat, and on the net, yea, on many things which cannot be enumerated here, as well as on the individual himself. When we transfer these facts into the spiritual sphere, the significance of the lesson is obvious. The Church, which is meant to do the "fishing for men," must examine how she stands regarding these matters.

Are her crew working in unison? Are her nets whole? Is the boat seaworthy?

It would be only fair to let the Church answer these questions, for the answer is not to man but to God.

As one of His humble fishermen I have to confess with great sorrow that the visible Church cannot give an affirmative answer, at least, so far as her past history is concerned. But we must let the dead past bury its dead. What of the present? The sea of life has never contained so many dangerous cross-currents, never have human interests been more conflicting, nor has the atmosphere in which man breathes been so full of poisonous elements. But her Captain has not lost control of the rudder; He is still at the helm; and

He can still calm the storms of the sea. He, however, needs the aid of the Church. It has pleased Him to make it the work of the crew to haul in the nets; if the crew does not know where the great draughts are to be got, He can still point out the spot to them. Faith, courage, singleness of purpose, comradeship, are all that are needed to achieve the end in view.

The masses are waiting for leadership which they can trust implicitly in all things. While the masses refuse to think out the problems of life, and are ready to be led, especially by such as offer heaven on earth, they will more gladly listen to the Church, because of Him Who is her head. But so long as the Church is not at peace with herself, so long as people see her drifting between Charybdis and Scylla, they are not likely to seek safety in her boat.

The net of which Jesus speaks is the seine net, or drag-net. It is the kind of net which sweeps in all manner of fish. Some are not marketable, and have to be picked out and cast away. The casting away is not the work of the Church, at least for the present. When she is herself fully redeemed she will do it with an unerring judgment. The Church, however, at present must not be discouraged because this task is not given her to do, nor

yet need it be considered that this is applicable in every case. A glance at Matt. xviii. 15–18 will show the other side of this problem. The Church's task is to sweep the whole sea of life, and leave nothing to chance. It is useless to speculate what is meant by " The consummation of the age." This is a Divine mystery which the Master Himself could not reveal.

The main lesson, so far as the disciples and we are concerned, is plain enough. The series of parables, covering the question how men become possessed of the Kingdom, is all-inclusive. God has made provision for all types of men ; some will find the Kingdom in the course of their daily toil ; some will give themselves up to a search after it. But the majority will have to be swept into it.

The disciples did their sweeping nobly and whole-heartedly ; the Church must do hers.

VIII

THE PARABLE OF FORGIVENESS

LUKE vii. 36–50

And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he entered into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And behold, a woman which was in the city, a sinner, when she knew that he was sitting at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster cruse of ointment, and standing behind at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have perceived who and what manner of woman this is which touches him, that she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he answered, Master, say on.

A certain lender had two debtors : the one owed him five hundred pence, and the other fifty. When they had not wherewith to pay, he forgave them both. Which of them therefore will love him most ?

Simon answered and said, He, I suppose, to whom he forgave the most. And he said to him, Thou hast rightly judged. And turning to the woman, he said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman ? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet : but she hath wetted my feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. Thou gavest me no kiss : but she, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint ; but she hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are

forgiven ; for she loved much : but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they who sat at meat with him said within themselves, Who is this that even forgiveth sins ? And he said unto the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee : go in peace.

THIS parable raises great issues.

Luke places the parable at the beginning of his Gospel, in point of order ; it comes after the raising of the widow of Nain's son. Further, Luke records this incident and omits the similar one, at Bethany during Passion Week. In the Bethany incident, Mary, the sister of Lazarus, according to John xii. 1–8, Matt. xxvi. 7–11, Mark xiv. 3–9 (Matthew and Mark do not give the name of the woman) anoints Jesus. We need not go into the details of similarity or difference between the accounts of the other three Gospels and that of our parable : the circumstances are so different as to make it unthinkable that the two can be one and the same. The fact that both people in whose house the anointing takes place are called Simon does no more prove the identity of the incidents than the name Simon, in the ranks of the disciples, proves the identity of Peter and Zelotes. Nor is it in the least unlikely that Jesus should be anointed by separate women at different times.

The silence of Luke regarding the Bethany incident must mean something, for the accounts of Passion Week in the Synoptists are more in agreement with each other than the rest of their records. Luke must have known of the Bethany incident ; yet he omits it from his Gospel.

This again brings out the individualism of Luke in the selection of his subject-matter. Luke found the story among his non-Marcan and Matthæan sources, and it so appealed to his instincts that he included it, and left out the other to save us from confusion ; but his aim has been defeated by theorists. If I had to write a biography of a man and I had the choice of two incidents to relate, such as the one in our parable and that which took place at Bethany, I should not hesitate for a single moment which of them I should include. The penitent creature who came into Simon's house, well knowing what this doughty Pharisee and his fellows would think about her, braving the shame, disregarding her surroundings, and through her tears seeing Jesus only, would have appealed irresistibly to me.

If Simon had been a leper cured by Jesus, would he have behaved towards Jesus as did the Simon of our parable ? If it was the house

of some Simon who was a leper, but who had died long since, would Matthew and Mark deem it necessary to tell us about it? It is amazing what theories men are ready to put forward to suit the particular viewpoint they are seeking to set forth. We must leave these issues which, while interesting, are not at all relevant to the parable itself.

The parable itself does not leave us in doubt as to what the main issues are. They are the right of Jesus to forgive sin, and the basis on which He does forgive. The two debtors are cited to help Simon to reach a right conclusion, but to give the whole section the name of "The parable of the Two Debtors" is like naming a book by the least consequential part of it. The issue is that of forgiveness, and the parable ought to be named accordingly.

The studied insolence of Simon to his Guest raises the question why he had invited Jesus to his house. When a guest is invited to any one's house, he expects to be offered the ordinary amenities of hospitality. When the guest is a Rabbi, the duty of offering hospitality, in its very best manner, is well recognized. But Simon invited Jesus to his house, and proceeded to violate every rule of hospitality. We infer that the invitation must have been forced upon Simon by his position in the

community. Nothing else can account for his peculiar treatment of his Guest. He had reluctantly conformed to what was expected of him, and he would do no more.

In the East when a person is invited to one's house it is usual to receive him with a kiss. In the case of a Rabbi, all the male members of the family wait at the entrance to the house and kiss his hands. In the house, the first thing that is attended to is the washing of the guest's feet. None of these civilities were offered to the Master, but He said nothing until His indignation was stirred by the callous heartlessness of the Pharisee to a woman.

The meal would be taken, either seated on the floor on straw mats round a low table, or on a divan made of clay and mortar, and spread with woollen cushions, round the walls of the house. It would seem from the description given in the narrative that the former was the case. To the English reader the description, "standing behind at his feet," may seem rather paradoxical; but it is just what would happen if they were seated on the floor. When so seated, one's legs are doubled under one, and the feet are parallel with one's back, so that, to do anything to the feet, the inevitable position would be "standing behind

at the feet." We see them seated round a low table made of reeds matted over a wooden framework, with their feet folded under them, no doubt engaged in conversation, when a woman enters the house. Now the entry of any woman into the main room of a house where guests are present, except for the purpose of serving the meal, is a most unusual thing; and the fact that this woman came to the house confirms me in my belief that the Pharisee was a public man, possibly holding the same position as do the Sheiks at the present day. The woman who came into the room was an outcast, or, as it is put for us by the narrator, "a sinner." If we assume that the incident took place in Nain, then it is easy to understand what brought the woman there. He Who could raise the dead could raise her out of her dead and sinful self to newness of life. I have known women from Palestine go as far afield as Russia to get a promise of forgiveness from a particular Rabbi or to obtain a promise of child-bearing. This woman created a stir in the house by her coming, but no one molested her. The Master allowed her to remain washing His feet with her tears, and wiping them with her hair, and then anointing them with the ointment. Simon was meanwhile thinking hard thoughts:

"It is just as I thought,"—this Man is no prophet, or else He would have known the character of this sinful woman. Jesus did not need to be a prophet to divine the thoughts of the man; his studied ill-manners had already revealed them. The Master makes use of the parable to confront Simon with his ill-behaviour and ingratitude, and to bring him, as Nathan brought David, to penitence and forgiveness. We must now turn to the pith of the parable.

While the main interest of the parable for us is found in the basis of forgiveness, the fact of forgiveness itself must not be overlooked, because in the ultimate resort it is the thing our own souls seek assurance in.

I would not raise this important theological question on the sole authority of this parable; for it involves us in a problem which is far-reaching. But the matter is part of the parable, and since it is raised in many other passages in the Gospels (for instance, Mark ii. 5–11), we are compelled to raise it here.

Had Jesus the right to forgive sin? So far as I am aware, no authoritative Jewish source indicates that the Messiah would have the right to forgive sin, though, in the general conception of the Messianic office, the belief that Messiah would redeem the world from

sin, in so far as He would change the nature of man, is part of the conception of the Messianic office.

The attitude of the Pharisees is expressed in the questions: "Who can forgive sins but God?" "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" Without entering upon a discussion of the meaning of sin, it must be granted that none but God can forgive sin. And the problem, stated plainly, is, that unless Jesus was God without reservations, without limitations (save the limitations of the flesh) and without qualifications, He could not forgive sin. It is not enough to say, "He was the Son of God." No son, however intimate his relations be with his father, or however harmonious and perfect their relationship may be, can forgive a debt due to the father. It is futile to argue that a theory we call 'Monotheism' demands that we should make a distinction in the Godhead. As one who was nurtured in Judaism and on Monotheism, I say that the most offensive thing to the Jew is this subordination of the Son to the Father and the Holy Spirit to both. It is to the Jewish mind rank polytheism, a godhead of degrees and gradations. The framers of the creeds whom every yellowback sneers at, and every emancipated know-nothing takes a

delight in lecturing, were at least consistent, if they were not as wise as the creedless and pointless mockers. Jesus was 'Theos alēthōs' (True God); 'Omoousion' (Consubstantial). Until the Church gets this matter quite settled in its own mind, neither Judaism nor Mohammedanism will listen to its christologies, theologies or philosophies.

Jesus never shows a trace of usurpation of authority when He forgives sins. He does it in a manner which carries conviction that He has a right to do it. The basis of our being made recipients of His forgiveness He makes plain in the last verse of the passage, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace," or rather, 'Lech-i le-shal-on' (Go to peace).

Need we further intrude our words on the scene? The sinful woman needed no further words; her faith in Jesus' ability, right and authority to forgive her sins, saved her and brought her peace. The same faith brings to-day to every penitent heart "the peace of God that passeth all understanding."

IX

THE PARABLE OF TRUE PURITY

MARK vii. 1–23

And there are gathered together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, who had come from Jerusalem, and had seen that some of his disciples ate their bread with defiled, that is, unwashen, hands. (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands diligently, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders ; and when they come from the market-place, except they bathe themselves, they eat not ; and many other things there are, which they have received to hold, washings of cups, and pots, and brazen vessels.) And the Pharisees and the scribes ask him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with defiled hands ? And he said unto them, Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written,

This people honoureth me with their lips,
But their heart is far from me.
But in vain do they worship me,
Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men.

Ye leave the commandment of God, and hold fast the tradition of men. And he said unto them, Full well do ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother ; and, He that speaketh evil of father or mother, let him die the death : But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or his mother, That wherewith thou mightest have been profited by me is Corban, that is to say, Given to God ; ye no longer suffer him to do aught for his father or his

mother ; making void the word of God by your tradition which ye have delivered. And many such like things ye do. And he called to him the multitude again, and said unto them, Hear me all of you, and understand : There is nothing from without the man, that going into him can defile him ; but the things which proceed out of the man, these defile the man. And when he was entered into the house from the multitude, his disciples asked of him the parable. And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also ? Perceive ye not, that whatsoever from without goeth into the man, it cannot defile him ; because it goeth not into his heart, but into his belly, and out into the draught ? This he said, making all meats clean. And he said, That which proceedeth out of the man, that defileth the man, for from within, out of the heart of men, evil thoughts proceed, fornication, thefts, murders, adulteries, covetings, wickednesses, deceit, lasciviousness, the evil eye, railing, pride, foolishness : all these evil things proceed from within, and defile the man.

It was not our intention to enter upon the perplexing question of N.T. chronology, and yet it is hardly possible to go through the parables without indicating about what time some of them, at least, were spoken. This parable seems to belong to about April of the last year of the public ministry, and it could not be long after the Passover, say, about the end of April. The coming down of Pharisees and Scribes from Jerusalem to watch Him and His disciples, and to pick a quarrel with them, would seem due to the fact of His having recently been to the Feast, and having done things which made the

authorities determined to put Him down. Their stilted traditionalism, however, was no match for the originality of the Man of Nazareth.

The reporting of this section by Mark, while giving the essentials, does not go into details, so that it does not clearly appear how the parable was put together. The corresponding section in Matthew (xv. 1–20) does not help us very much in setting things in their proper order, for it is but a mere duplicate of the Marcan narrative, the only difference being that the questioner in Matthew is given as Peter, whereas in Mark 'the disciples' are said to have asked the question as to the meaning of the parable.

Local Setting

Judaism was a highly hygienic religion, and also it was very strictly dietetic. In order to gain an idea of these two features, take an ordinary day in the life of a pious Jew.

A basin and a jug full of water are placed within three strides from his sleeping-place, for three strides are the limit which one is allowed to walk with unwashed hands. But even before these three strides are taken, a prayer, in which the name of God must not be

pronounced, is said in thanksgiving for the return of the soul, which is deemed to have been in the presence of God and to have recorded all the actions of the day before, in the book of remembrance, which is kept for each individual. The prayer is beautiful in its own way, and is worth quoting: "I confess before Thee, Thou living and eternal King, that Thou hast returned my soul. Thy compassion is great, as is also Thy faithfulness" (I quote from memory). After this prayer, the hands are washed. This entails the washing of each hand from the tips of the fingers to the joint of the wrist, and each hand must be washed (that is to say, water must be poured over it) three times; this is the official injunction. The thanksgiving prayer, made up of a number of passages commencing with "The beginning of wisdom is the fear of Jehovah," is then completed. When this is finished and the man is dressed, he makes his way to the Synagogue; and, should he have had occasion to touch his body or anything which is deemed unclean, on arrival at the Synagogue he must wash his hands again. In every place of worship a vessel of water is built into the wall for this purpose. The strictest Jews have a small dish of water near their seats in the Synagogue, and use it to dip

their fingers into, if they should happen to come in contact with their body. Some have slippers that are kept in the Synagogue, into which they change on arrival, so that no dust of an unholy nature may cling to them. The morning prayers last for about an hour for the working man and the business man, and for the Rabbis about two or three hours. The women, as a rule, open the shops before the men finish their prayers. On getting home, the hands are washed again for the partaking of breakfast. At this simple meal, as a rule, there is milk. Nothing may be eaten out of a vessel in which meat is cooked for half an hour. If there is cheese, nothing pertaining to meat, or anything cooked in a meat vessel, may be eaten for the space of six hours. The six-hour-law which has to elapse between the eating of anything pertaining to milk, and any meat, regulates the meal hours in the Jewish household. Thus, three meals a day, at an interval of six hours or more, are partaken of. The food is very carefully selected. The meat is killed by an official who is trained for that purpose, and who is called upon to examine the animal. His examination is generally confined to the liver, the lungs and the brain, but in the case of very particular Jews the stomach is examined also. If there is the

slightest sign of disease, the animal is declared to be 'tar-pha,' that is, not fit for food, though the word really means a prey to disease.

Of course it goes without saying that the animal must be sound of limb: otherwise it is not killed at all. When the official killer is done with his examination, the animal carcass is sent to an official anatomist who cuts out certain parts, especially sinews and arteries. When the meat reaches the householder, the women have their duties to perform in respect of its legality. The meat is well salted and is left for three-quarters of an hour; this is done to extract all the blood in the meat. It is then put into water and left soaking for half an hour, partly to remove the salt and partly to drain further any blood which may have been left in the meat. In pious and well-to-do families two kitchens are used, one for the purpose of cooking anything pertaining to meat, the other for cooking anything pertaining to milk. The animals that may be eaten are, for the most part, sheep, goats and cattle. While deer are also legal, I only remember one deer being used for food. Of fowls, the ordinary farmyard fowls are permissible as food—the hen, duck, goose and turkey. The partridge is also legal, but since it must not be shot, nor trapped—for the shooting or trap-

ping would make it unclean—it is therefore not obtainable. The midday meal is fairly substantial, and here again the washing of hands, in the legal manner, is necessary. A blessing precedes and follows the meal. Afternoon prayers are said between midday and sunset, as a rule about 5 p.m. The evening prayer follows; three stars must be visible before the evening Shemah can be said. The evening meal is the principal meal of the day, and the same observances of washing of hands and blessings before and after the meal take place. At the end of this meal a blessing is said over a cup of wine, and the father, or the Rabbi if there should be one present, sets forth passages of Scripture. The women of the household do not have their meals with the men, but separately. After the evening meal the men return to the Synagogue, where the Talmud and Mishnah are studied, or they may remain at home and study there. The last thing at night is a string of very beautiful prayers of thanksgiving for the mercies of the day and for pardon for its misdeeds; and last of all there is the committal of oneself to the care of Him Who sleepeth not nor slumbereth, but ever guardeth Israel, the last words being, "May Michael be on my right-hand side, on my left Gabriel, and at my head

the Shekinah of God." With such a guard, sleep can be enjoyed without fear. When the Master permitted the disciples to omit the observances pertaining to hand-washing which, if nothing else, was a cleanly thing, and when He further explained that all the laws pertaining to food might be disregarded, the disciples, as well as the Pharisees, must have felt very uneasy about His teaching. It meant the total reversal of their views on observances and rules. These things were practised by very honest, pious and good-living people, and when the disciples told Jesus that the Pharisees were offended because of His sayings, they did not mean those who had come down from Jerusalem (their purpose was obvious enough), but they must have alluded to others who were sympathetically inclined to His teaching.

We have in our passage not only a parable, but a strong denunciation of traditionalism. " You keep the traditions (for the Law had nothing to say in regard to hand-washing), but you set the Law at naught. According to the Law, it is the duty of a son to honour his father and mother, and in this is included their support in need; but you say that, if a son should give his money to the upkeep of the Temple, he is absolved from supporting his

parents. Can anything be further from the spirit of the Law? As to foods, the Creator made nothing evil in itself, and thus nothing which goes into the mouth is unclean, but rather that which comes out of it." Jesus was not, of course, opposed to the washing of hands, or the eating of certain foods and not eating others. What He was very strongly against was the making of a fetish of these things. It was a case of ritual before godliness, and this Jesus opposed with all the power of His being. We would do well to relearn the lessons of this parable. Our modern society has its own pharisaisms. It has set rules for its eating and dressing, but it says little about character. You may come to a dinner with a sinful and lustful heart; you may be what you care in your own life; that does not matter, so long as you obey the requirements of dress and deportment. In our churches, also, there are many who spend a great deal more time and thought on their persons and their food than they do on the feeding of their souls. I cannot picture Jesus as unwashed and unkempt, nor yet in any way unclean, so far as His person was concerned. The painters who present Him in flowing white garments are doubtless drawing on their imagination. He was often tired, worn, and

besprinkled with the dust of the Palestinian roads. But we may be sure He was clean in body as in soul, though He made no fetish of it.

It is difficult to say if the lesson was wasted on the disciples, or if they took the inner meaning of it only as applicable. For the account in Acts x. 9–16 indicates that at least Peter still held the Levitical, if not the traditional, views concerning clean and unclean foods. Western folk can hardly grasp the hold which these ideas have upon the Jewish mind. I know that, for a considerable time, certain foods that are eaten in the West revolted me, but I can now eat these things because Jesus has made them clean for me. And Peter, Paul and the others must have had a vivid conviction of the Risen Christ, else they would never have written and done what they did regarding food. The lesson of the parable needs no comment. Clean language, such as proceeds out of a clean mind and heart, makes the Christian. In practice, this has worked out as might have been expected.

Christian countries are the cleanest, and their language the most sober and becoming ; and when this is taken beyond nominal Christianity to the actual followers of the Man

of Nazareth, the truth is even more obvious. The cottage of the Christian working man is as clean as the palace, and the cottar's speech, though plain, is such as becomes a follower of Jesus.

X

GOD'S READINESS TO ANSWER OUR PRAYERS

LUKE xi. 5–9

And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say to him, Friend, lend me three loaves ; for a friend of mine is come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him ; and he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not ; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed ; I cannot rise and give ? I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will arise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask and it shall be given you ; seek and ye shall find ; knock and it shall be opened unto you.

IT was the habit of the great teachers in Israel to guide their followers in their devotional exercises by reciting forms of prayer. The Baptist had done so, and the disciples of Jesus came to Him with the request that He should teach them some form of prayer.

St. Luke gives us the substance of the prayer He set before them as a model in the verses preceding our passages. Having given them a form, the Master goes on to illustrate God's willingness to answer prayer, and takes

for His purpose an illustration from life, dealing with human friendship. Owing to the difference in the manner of living in the East and the West, it is necessary to explain the setting of the parable.

Hospitality is a duty in which the Eastern people love to excel. The man of our parable was no doubt one to whom the entertaining of a friend was a joy. But travel in the East is very uncertain, as well as uncomfortable, and the guest did not arrive until near midnight.

The means of providing bread for a household are of two kinds.

I. In the case of the small villages and the nomadic peoples, the flour is kneaded and baked on the same day; very often only enough for one meal is baked, but as a rule the baking is for the requirements of the whole day. As no leaven is used, it is possible to prepare it on very short notice. The fact that it is baked in very thin loaves (about the thickness of ordinary writing-paper, and the size of a soup plate) makes the baking of the loaves a matter of a minute or so, and where this method is in use no borrowing of bread is done.

II. In the case of the larger villages and towns, there are community bakers. The

bread is prepared at home, and when it is ready for the oven, it is collected and sent to the bake-house. The occasions for baking are regulated by the family requirements, but on Friday every household has a baking for the Sabbath. It is, however, often impossible to judge with exactness the quantity required, and so it comes about that a good deal of borrowing among neighbours takes place. Economy demands that all the old bread should be eaten before the new arrives, for the young folk, especially, will not eat the old if they know that there is new bread in the house. Thus the housewife has to study her baking-days very carefully, and does not keep to any regular days, save the Fridays.

The friend of our story arrived late on the night prior to baking-day, and found the family breadless. The host, after making his friend at home by offering him water to wash himself, went off to borrow some bread. As a rule, the woman of the house would do that, but the lateness of the hour and the fact that other edibles would have to be prepared, made it necessary for the man to go.

Now stop for a moment to consider the interior of the average Palestinian house, in order to understand the answer. Except among the rich, the house consists of one large

room, which serves the whole family. The bedding is kept in a recess in the wall, and at night-time is taken out and spread on reed mats on the floor. The father and mother of the family sleep in the centre of the room, the youngest children on the father's right-hand side ; but if there is an infant, it is in a cradle next to the mother. The older male children sleep next to the youngest children, with their heads next to the wall and their feet towards the youngest children. The girls occupy the mother's side of the room. With an average family, the father's getting up would certainly disturb the household, especially the children sleeping next to him. This would offer a good excuse for the lender, should he wish an excuse. The main fact is that he does get up and lend the friend the bread asked for.

A difficulty is raised by the fact that the Master goes into details of the motive for lending, and a troublesome word has misled the commentators and writers. It is necessary to ascertain the probable word used by the Master. The word selected by our translators is one from Beza's text of the N.T., namely, ' Importunitatem.' The Vulgate, on the other hand, has the word ' Improbitas.' The Greek word is ' Anaideia.' It is

the Greek word which matters most, to begin with, for only from it can we hope to arrive at the actual Aramaic word, or words, used by the Master. So far, then, as the Greek word is concerned, it may be safely asserted that it has not the meaning of 'Importunity' which our translators selected for us. In both classical and dialectical Greek, the suggestion of 'Anaideia' is 'impudence, shamelessness, barefacedness.' Taking the Greek word at its face value, the lesson meant to be taught would be that of shameless insistence. But the whole trend of the thought in the parable is upset by such an implication. The question under consideration is prayer; and after giving the disciples an example of a prayer which breathes a spirit of dependence upon God, are we to believe that Jesus goes on to tell the disciples that they must be insistent in their demands upon God, if they are to get what they need? Further, the conclusion of the whole matter is in these words, "Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you"—a very strange summing-up of a parable which was to teach importunity!

I am fully aware that the Church has understood the teaching of the parable to be importunity and insistence in prayer, and I

know how much weight that carries. I am also aware that many very earnest Christian men and women to-day hold the lesson of the parable to centre round the idea of importunity. But if I am not mistaken, the Christian view of God forbids altogether the idea of importunity.

Let us look carefully into the context of the text. We must notice, in the first place, that the whole parable is in the interrogative. The whole is governed by the first clause, "Who among you having a friend?" Does Jesus mean to imply that our friends will refuse our request till we make ourselves such a nuisance to them that they give us what they do not wish to give? If this is the teaching and if translated into terms of relationship between us and God, what does it amount to? It would seem to amount to saying that, if we come to God asking for things which He is unwilling to give us, yet if we insist, He will yield. I am constrained to say that no one will accept this as a possible relation between our Heavenly Father and ourselves. The final objection to the idea of importunity as a Christian doctrine is found in the fact that it is contrary both to the spirit and general teaching of the Master, and to His practice.

What then was the word, or what were the words, that Jesus used on this occasion? 'Anaideia' is made use of by the Greek translators in several passages in the O.T. (Deut. xxvii. 50; Prov. vii. 13, xxi. 9; Eccles. viii. 1). In these places it or its derivatives are equivalent to the Hebrew 'Ouz.' This word and its cognate term 'Azaz' means primarily strength, power to give strength, power; and so, to fortify, to encourage. It is but right that it should be pointed out that, in all the references given, the word 'Ouz' is used in a bad sense; it is used for hardness of face, strength of face for evil, yet this does not alter the fact that it is used as the equivalent of the word 'Anaideia.' Is it not possible that we have here a case of difficulty of translation of the Aramaic or Hebrew into the Greek, and that the word Jesus used was 'Ouz' in the sense of strengthening, fortifying or encouraging?

To sum up, what Jesus draws on is that a friend will not refuse us what we stand in great need of. How much less will God do so? Taking the rest of the passage in the section (verses 10–13), we see that again there is a comparison and that it is all in favour of God's willingness to grant our petitions. To me the whole lesson emphasizes the principle

that God is sure to help us when we are helpless ourselves, as was the man who went to borrow the bread. There was no bread in his house, not because of any negligence, but because of the habits of the people. The result was to render him unable to fulfil the law of Eastern hospitality. From this predicament his friend provided the way of escape, giving him "all that he needed." Jesus would teach us that what appeals to our Father is not our importunity, but the need out of which our importunity arises. Our Heavenly Father is ready to answer our prayers, not merely because we are children, but because we are needy children. His motive is to be found in His anxiety to help us when we cannot help ourselves. And, further, it is not straining the parable to find in it that God does not give what costs Him nothing, but that He puts Himself and His children out at times to grant us our request when we are in special need of His help. When life's problems are pressing us sore, we may turn to God in confidence that He will not refuse us what we stand in sore need of. Not that we will get everything we ask; that might well be calamitous: but all our deepest needs will, in the wealth of God's wisdom and power, be supplied.

XI

TRUE FREEDOM

THE LAST OF THE GALILEAN PARABLES

MATT. xvii. 24–27

And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received the half-shekel came to Peter, and said, Doth not your teacher pay the half-shekel? He saith, Yea. And when he came into the house, Jesus spake first to him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? the kings of the earth, from whom do they receive toll or tribute? from their sons, or from strangers? And when he said, From strangers, Jesus saith unto him, Therefore the sons are free. But, lest we cause them to stumble, go thou to the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a shekel; take that, and give unto them for me and thee.

THIS section is, as a general rule, included in the "miracles" and not in the parables of the Master. It is, however, no easy task to separate the parabolic from the miraculous in the teaching of the Master; each parable is a miracle of wisdom, and each miracle is a parable. Here they merge into each other with such delicacy that it is not to be wondered at that writers on these two phases of the ministry should both claim this for their respective works.

The Background

The Master had gone into Syria, presumably to escape for a while from the persecution of the authorities, but the real reason for the crossing would seem rather to have been the desire for a time of quietness with His disciples, in order to fit them for coming events. During the sojourn, Peter had, on his own behalf and as spokesman of the little band, made the great declaration of his and their faith, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The Church, since that day, has based its faith on that declaration. After six days, the 'Transfiguration' and their return to Capernaum led up to the great events that were so soon to come to pass.

The Master went to His own city, Capernaum, to bid farewell to His beloved Galilee. It was a very solemn time. Those of us who have had to bid farewell to the scenes of our early life, to the places that tender memories make very dear, can share to some extent the feelings of the Master. On coming to Capernaum it would seem that the disciples dispersed to their homes and dwelt among their friends, while Jesus went to the home of Peter. This view arises from the context of

the passage under consideration. In any case, when the collectors came with their question as to the payment of tribute they encountered Peter alone.

The imposition of the half-shekel tribute is first recorded in Ex. xxx. 11–16. It is very difficult to reconcile this passage with Neh. x. 33, where the tribute is stated as a third of a shekel. It may be taken for granted that the half-shekel tribute was a post-exilic imposition (see 2 Chron. xxiv. 3–10; Josephus, *Ant.*, book xviii. chapter ix. par D). The story of *Asinsus and Anileus* leaves no doubt as to the existence of the tax, as does also the mention of it in the tractate *Shekalim*, and in *Bell. Jud.* vii. 6, 6. It would appear from the Exodus passage that the tax was looked upon as a propitiation tax, and that it was set apart for the Temple service and upkeep. According to the tractate *Shekalim*, iii. 3 ff. and *Yoma*, l. ff., the tribute in Palestine was collected during the month preceding the Feast of the Passover (the month Adar, say March), while Jews living outside Palestine could pay as late as the month of October. During the reign of Solome-Alexandra (79–70 B.C.), it was enacted that any one who did not pay the half-shekel (about one shilling and threepence) by the twenty-fifth of Adar

(during March) should have his property confiscated for payment.

The collectors, hearing that Jesus was in the town, made their way to the house in which He was, to ask for the tribute. We may safely conclude that it was during the month of Adar (March) that this took place, and that it was just the ordinary time for collecting the tax. Meeting Peter on the street or in the courtyard, they asked him if his Rabbi was willing to pay the tribute. Peter answered without hesitation that He would pay it. The reason why the question was put in the form given us may have been due to the knowledge of the collectors that there was conflict between Jesus and the Jerusalem people. The commentators who think that it was back payment are mistaken. It was payment for the year that was approaching. Peter, having assured the collectors that the money would be paid, made his way back to the house to report that he had been asked for payment.

As we do not know where the meeting between Peter and the collectors took place, it is not possible to say if Jesus saw the collectors speaking to Peter. At any rate He knew what was in Peter's mind when he came into the house, and, anticipating Peter's

words, He spoke the parable of the Tribute. The details are of no consequence, but the problem the paying of the tax presented was of great importance, both from the viewpoint of the Master Himself and from that of His disciples. Did He, Who was declared so recently by Peter to be the Son of God, need to pay a propitiation tax? Was He subject to it? If Jesus admitted that He was, it would make things difficult for Him and for them. First, the question of His Sonship would arise, and second, that of His sinlessness, for, as we have observed, it was a propitiation tax. The parable sought to answer both these problems, and thus brings out the deeper and more significant lesson as to what real freedom is. Freedom does not involve so much the yielding up of inherent rights, as the using of these rights with a will to peace and goodwill. It means, according to our parable, the control of the will, so that it can be made to do what it is disinclined to do.

Not to allow the will to claim exceptional or preferential treatment though He was entitled to it, but by choice to bear the burdens of our common humanity—that was Jesus' freedom. Yet the position was very delicate and difficult. Was Jesus and were the disciples subject to the Law and to the authorities in Jerusalem?

Had we been in Jesus' position our dilemma would have been complete, but His mind was never subject to our common dilemmas. He pointed out that in principle He was free from the payment of the half-shekel. "For the sons are free." Whatever they give is given of their free will, but as the 'Prince of Peace' it behoves Him not to be a disturber of the peace. Our wills are not a mockery; they are free even from the control of God; but they are ours to make them His.

It is our prerogative to do what we will with our freedom, yet the right thing to do, the Master points out, is not to stand on our rights, but to take into consideration the feelings of others, and especially the good pleasure of God. The parable is far-reaching, and is significant. Tribute is exacted not by the Father but by the kings of the nations, 'Malchai umoth H'olam' (God exacts not nor demands anything from us). What we give to Him we give freely and unrestrainedly. But the world makes demands on us, and some of them run contrary to our will; yet for the sake of peace and our fellow-men we must, or rather we should, deny ourselves the exercise of our freedom. The circumstances would have justified Jesus' refusal to pay the tribute, both from the point of view of the

conclusion the disciples might draw from the action and from the fact that He had not the money wherewith to pay the tribute, but He would not. This first act had its ill results: Peter remained the Judaiser, and refused to eat or mix with the Gentiles. Had the Master on the other hand refused payment, it would have broken the slender threads by which His relation with the authorities and the Law was held, and He came not to destroy but to fulfil; and His position was thus extraordinarily difficult. He alone could have met it as He did. The lesson He sought to teach was of such significance that He braved being misunderstood, and committed to time and the Holy Spirit the task of the enlightenment of the disciples. He taught the world that He had a right not to use His rights, and He demonstrated effectively that the cause of peace and goodwill is worth a great deal. Yet, in doing so, He has left us in no doubt as to the rights of the matter.

The conclusion of the narrative may be said to belong, properly speaking, to works on 'Miracles.' Yet how long are we to remain in the state of childishness and treat certain acts of Jesus as 'miraculous'? Jesus never performed miracles save for two classes of folk—the childish and the self-estimative

and over-burdened with learning. I find myself performing miracles in the sight of some children every day. When I do anything the child's mind cannot reason out, I am performing a miracle, but I know that the child is growing and as it grows it will learn, and what is to-day miraculous will become to-morrow its everyday experience. Now Jesus naturally knew Peter's thoughts ; even we can often anticipate the thoughts of our friends, because we know them intimately. Jesus also knew that the required money could be found in a fish, and, not having the money, He sent Peter to get it there, just as I might send some one to my purse to get a coin. Had Jesus called the coin forth from empty space, like a juggler, I should have been surprised ; but He did nothing of the kind. He sent Peter to get it from a fish which had swallowed it. When men say this could not be, it behoves them to remember they are dealing with the Christ, the Son of the living God. It is easier to say what we cannot do than to put a limit to His power. For myself I find God in Jesus alone, and God is able for all these things. But if the writer of our Gospel has added the passage concerning the finding of the coin, or if we should find a record which would tell us how, on the occasion

set forth, Peter borrowed from John the stater, or sold for a stater the fish he caught, the lesson of the parable will still be of first-class importance; will still remain a miracle of wisdom and a contribution to the problem of human freedom and its uses for those of us who look to Jesus for the word of life; and will exercise authority and guide us in the practice of our daily life.

XII

ACCEPTANCE OF OPPORTUNITY AS THE TEST OF CHARACTER

LUKE x. 25–37

And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and made trial of him, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life ? And he said unto him, What is written in the law ? How readest thou ? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind ; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right : this do, and thou shalt live. But he, desiring to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour ? Jesus made answer and said, A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho ; and he fell among robbers, who both stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance a certain priest was going down that way : and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And in like manner a Levite also, when he came to the place, and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was ; and when he saw him, he was moved with compassion, and came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on them oil and wine ; and he set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow he took out two shillings, and gave them to the host, and said, Take care of him ; and whatsoever thou spendest more, I, when I come back again, will repay thee. Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbour unto him that fell among the robbers ? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. And Jesus said unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

THE author of our third Gospel realized how dangerous a half-truth may be, and I believe that, in addition to the fact that he was a Gentile and did not share Jewish prejudice, he purposely sets forth certain facts concerning the Samaritans that the other writers do not record.

The Master, after paying the Temple tribute, "set his face towards Jerusalem." There were three roads by means of which people from Galilee travelled to the Holy City. One was through Galilee as far as Bethabara, thence south-west through Decapolis as far as Jericho, and thence south-east to Jerusalem. This was the common road used by the Jews in order to avoid the cities of the Samaritans. The second route led the wayfarer west, towards the Mediterranean, and thence south-by-east, following the sea-coast more or less as far as Jaffa, and thence south-east to Jerusalem. This road was especially used by people who came by boat to Palestine. So far as we know, Jesus never made a journey on this route. The third and most natural road lay south, past Shechem, Ephraim and Ramah, but the unwillingness of the Jews to come into touch with the Samaritans caused them to make the detour *via* Bethabara.

The Master had yet many things to do ere He was to reach Jerusalem, and one of these was the appointing of the Seventy to go out and preach the arrival of the Kingdom of God. Before sending these forth, the incident took place which is recorded in Luke ix. 51–55. The Master had evidently decided to go through Samaria in order to disabuse the disciples' minds of the prejudices they had against the Samaritans, but, unfortunately, the inhabitants of the Samaritan village for which He was making refused Him hospitality because He was going to Jerusalem. This must have been a very severe blow to the Master. John and James, we know, were furious, and would have liked to see the village consumed by fire. But the Master rebuked them. To teach the disciples that there are good as well as bad among the Samaritans would, at that particular time, have been of no avail. Jesus was too great a teacher and a student of men to attempt it. He would seize the first favourable opportunity to teach them the lesson He had had in mind. The opportunity was not far distant; for a certain man of letters, wishing to show his own erudition, and to test the Master, asked Him what he should do to become worthy of the future life. The question was

a legitimate one. It is something that every right-thinking man and woman should inquire into. The Master met the man on friendly terms, and asked him as to the point of view from which he approached the question. Of course, it was from the viewpoint of the Law : and the man stated his attitude in two famous passages from the Law. Deut. vi. 5 is the beginning of the ' Shema,' the most important Jewish prayer, as well as its confession of faith. It is believed among the Jews that any one who makes that confession before his death is sure of eternal life. This verse, said with the last dying breath, is called ' Vidah ' (Confession). The second passage is not so characteristic of Judaism, but from the time of the Great Hillel, who summarized the Law to an inquirer in the words, " Love thy neighbour as thyself," it became a famous passage. The Master made no objection to this summary. It certainly contained the essence of Judaism, and He commended the practice of these passages as a means to the end the man was seeking. The questioner was, however, not the kind of man who wanted an opinion or a straight answer. He wished to parade his knowledge and the excellence of his life, and he next asked, " Who is my neighbour ? " Jesus set forth His answer in

the form of a parable, with the intention of answering His questioner and at the same time leading the disciples to a more reasonable view regarding their attitude towards the Samaritans. He had told the apostles, whom He had sent forth to preach the coming of the Kingdom, to avoid the Samaritan villages, as well as those of the Gentiles, because the time for that was not yet. Before they could appreciate the whole content of the Kingdom, a new sense of power had to be brought to them ; but this new sense of power awaited the Resurrection. Meantime something could be done. The bringing of the Samaritan into the parable, because of the appositeness of its lesson, is a stroke which only the Master could have achieved. ' All Israel are neighbours ' (Kol Israel chaverim) was the teaching of the Fathers. The Rabbis have taught that ' All Israel are responsible for one another ' (Kol Israel reavim ze be ze). The Master teaches that friendliness, kindliness and humanitarianism pass right beyond the boundary line of race and ritual law. There are Jewish apologists who tell us that Jesus did not add much to the essence of religion. He added here a very great deal to the man of letters' summary of the essence of Judaism, and some of our Jewish friends

would do well to study this carefully. For the parable does not merely set forth the fact that there is good among the Samaritans, but also that there is much that is wrong among the Jews, and particularly that such Laws as made Priest or Levite keep himself at all hazards from contact with the dead ought to be relegated to the past, and make place for a new Law in which true brotherliness, without distinction, should be honoured.

Let us be clear that Jesus did not mean to suggest that an ordinary Jew would not have done the same as the Samaritan : far from it. But He did wish to point out what an inhuman institution official Judaism had become. For the simple fact was, that Priest and Levite dared not go to the help of the grievously injured man lest, dying in their hands, he should render them ceremonially unclean and unfit them for the discharge of their Temple duties. Of course, it might be answered that Judaism has some very sane and human laws : as indeed it has. Yet the charge against Judaism, substantiated in the parable, that a religious Jew in deference to his religion might act worse than an irreligious one, or even than a despised stranger, admits of no answer, and proves that Judaism required, and still requires, the infusion of a new spirit.

While this is the main thought of the parable, induced by the question, "Who is my neighbour?" there is a lesson in it for the man who asked the question. If it had been a Samaritan who was injured, and he himself had chanced to go down that way, his religion would have made him pass by also. But says Jesus, in effect, "Know that the law of mercy is wide as humanity itself, and racial pride or religious strife may not interfere with it. Go thou therefore and, wherever there is opportunity, show mercy if thou wouldest enter into eternal life."

Just in conclusion, one thinks again of these disciples who would, if they could, have called down fire from heaven on these detestable Samaritans. Their recent experience further satisfied them that the Samaritans were not better than they were called. Yet it was from a Samaritan's act of kindness that their Master taught them the universal obligation of the law of mercy, and that nothing is greater or can stand in its place. When these same disciples became heralds of the Cross to the Gentile nations, they showed conclusively that they had learned the lesson of this parable.

XIII

THINGS THAT MATTER

THE UNCERTAINTY OF LIFE, THE CULTIVATION OF THE SOUL, AND THE CARE OF GOD

LUKE xii. 13–48

And one of the multitude said unto him, Teacher, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me. But he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he reasoned within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have not where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry. But God said unto him, Thou foolish man, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. For the life is more than the food, and the body than the raiment. Consider the ravens, that they sow not, neither

reap ; which have no store-chamber nor barn ; and God feedeth them : of how much more value are ye than the birds ? And which of you by being anxious can add a cubit unto the measure of his life ? If then ye are not able to do even that which is least, why are ye anxious concerning the rest ? Consider the lilies, how they grow : they toil not, neither do they spin ; yet I say unto you, Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass in the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven ; how much more shall he clothe you, O ye of little faith ? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, and what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after : but your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. Yet seek ye his kingdom, and these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock ; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that which ye have, and give alms ; make for yourselves purses which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief draweth near, neither moth destroyeth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning ; and be ye yourselves like unto men looking for their lord, when he shall return from the marriage feast ; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may straightway open unto him. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching : verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and shall come and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, and if in the third, and find them so, blessed are those servants. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what hour the thief was coming, he would have watched, and not have left his house to be broken through. Be ye also ready : for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh.

And Peter said, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even unto all ? And the Lord said, Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his Lord shall set over his house-

hold, to give them their portion of food in due season ? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will set him over all that he hath. But if that servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming ; and shall begin to beat his menservants and the maidservants, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken ; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he expecteth not, and in an hour when he knoweth not, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint his portion with the unfaithful. And that servant, who knew his lord's will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes ; but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. And to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required ; and to whom they commit much, of him will they ask the more.

I DO not intend to deal in detail with the whole of the section that embraces the parable and that which arises from it. It is indeed difficult to say where the lesson of the parable ends ; verse 58 seems to suggest that the thought is continuous and that the Master was keeping before His mind the whole time the point which the litigating brother had brought to Him.

The first thing to note is the refusal of Jesus to arbitrate in a matter that was properly the business of the civil court. It does not at all follow that we extract from this an indication of what is, and what is not, the function of the civil authorities in matters of dispute. One thing is, however, clear, that Jesus did not

deem Himself an adjudicator of civil cases, as every Rabbi did. His was a mission to the soul, and He took the opportunity the request offered to teach some weighty lessons.

It is not clear who is meant by 'them' of verse 15, whether it is the disciples or the people in general. If the whole chapter was spoken at the same time, then it would appear that Peter felt the same difficulty (cf. verse 41). The author of our third Gospel certainly perplexes us by the arrangement of his material, for he gives it semblance of chronological continuity as well as logical sequence, but neither of them can be accepted on critical grounds or without relegating the other Gospels to secondary positions.

The action of the man represented in the parable is so very common in our day that it needs no comment, but it certainly needs cautious treatment. It is not an issue whether it is right or wrong for a man to make provision for old age or for retirement. The question is, what one hopes to do with the wealth that is acquired. The parable itself, so far as its few verses go (verses 16–19), leaves us in no doubt as to the Master's attitude to the acquisitive nature of our society; what follows leaves *us* in no doubt. His faith in the providence of God was as whole

and simple as is the child's in the father. He Who provides for the raven, and clothes the lily more beautifully than Solomon clothed himself in the day of his glory, will not withhold, or fail to supply us in our need. It is refreshing to turn from the foolish acquisitiveness of our modern life to this section, and especially to the loving confidence of the Son of God in His Father. The man of the parable really thought within himself that all that was necessary to satisfy his being was for him to increase his wealth. But soul-culture is not obtained from tables well provided with the good things of this world. The life is more than meat, and the body more than clothes.

The Christian man cannot satisfy his soul with the extension of his warehouses, nor the swelling of his banking account. It is true that many make elaborate wills, in which lurks self-satisfaction rather than self-sacrifice, and they take good care to make provision that the wealth they have accumulated reaches the desired destination. Very often their money is a godsend to missions and hospitals, but if their goods and wealth are the result of sweated labour, of underpaid and underfed fellow-creatures, that is an abomination in the sight of God. Nor is it

uncommon for people to draw their last breath planning or ordering their worldly affairs; and the starved soul enters into eternity, soiled by greed and worldly care. We must never forget that the body is only given to us that we may, by means of it, express and give effect to the soul's longing. It is sad to contemplate how starved the generality of souls are, and how little soul-cultivation is done, even by those who name the name of Jesus amongst us. To seek a retreat from the busy centres of our modern cities to refresh the body is right and good; but how many seek a retreat for the soul? Will we ever learn the wisdom of God as it is manifested in the teaching and actions of Jesus?

The lessons of the section under consideration are as indicated in the heading.

1. *The Uncertainty of Life.*—In the inscrutable wisdom of God some of us are given a warning that the end is drawing near; others are called very suddenly, and in a way we often describe as "tragic." The man in our parable was called suddenly, and all his planning was ended; his soul was required of him, and a very sorry and forlorn thing it must have appeared before its Giver. Thus the litigious brother got his answer. He

asked the Master to arbitrate, and the arbitration must have been brought home to his unforeseen judgment, for he was shown the man he might become, and what might be his fate. It behoves all who sit at the feet of the Nazarene to be ready at a moment's notice to quit this earthly tabernacle.

2. *The Culture of the Soul.*—The soul cannot be satisfied with eating and drinking; quiet and undisturbed communion with God is the only food upon which the soul can thrive, and the Christian man and woman, who feed their souls on that when the limitations of the body are removed, will be satisfied when they awaken in His likeness.

With a varied experience from early boyhood that would satisfy any lover of adventure, I can testify to the truth of the conclusions enjoined by the Master in the teaching of this parable. No amount of moralizing can outweigh the experience that God has clothed and fed us, and that His care has been never-failing and never-faltering; and I feel sure that it is the experience of countless others that, if they put their trust in God, they never are confounded.

Jesus was not an ascetic; He was charged by the Jews with being a 'glutton' (Luke vii. 34). That charge was, of course, untrue,

but Jesus did not, under ordinary circumstances, neglect the needs of the body. On the other hand, He certainly did not live to eat and drink. " My meat is to do the will of him that sent me," He said (John iv. 34).

The supply of the necessities of the body, He was confident, would never be lacking so long as the care of God remained what He knew it to be. The Psalmist bears testimony in his own way to this truth, " I have been young, now I am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." This truth the pious Jew repeats every day, and it is this truth the Master expounds to the litigating brother, the disciples and ourselves.

The man came asking Jesus to tell his brother to divide the inheritance with him. After dismissing the purely civil aspect of the case as something with which He was not concerned, the Master goes on to teach some lessons on the real issue that was raised :

I. Acquisitiveness is a sinful lust ; it means the getting of something which the other person has.

II. When obtained, wealth is liable to give a false sense of security.

Deeper than these considerations :

I. Life is God's ; He gives and takes it at will.

II. As the gift of life is God's, He makes Himself responsible for its maintenance, and to doubt that is to be lacking in childlike faith.

III. Life is not synonymous with health and continuance of the body, but in man it is joined with the soul which distinguishes man from the animal creation. The cultivation of the soul is man's chief duty. If he will attend to that, God will attend to the rest.

XIV

DIVINE PATIENCE

LUKE xiii. 3–10

I tell you, Nay : but, except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and killed them, think ye that they were offenders above all the men that dwell in Jerusalem ? I tell you, Nay : but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

And he spake this parable ; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard ; and he came seeking fruit thereon, and found none. And he said unto the vinedresser, Behold these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none : cut it down ; why doth it also cumber the ground ? And he answering saith unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it : and if it bear fruit thenceforth, well ; but if not, thou shalt cut it down.

And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath day.

NEWS had reached the Master of the slaughter of certain Galileans by Pilate. This action of Pilate is not mentioned in any Jewish source, but it is far from unlikely. The Master drew certain lessons from this incident, and from another of which we have no record ; they

were lessons answering the thoughts or questionings of His hearers. The natural conclusion for the Jews to arrive at concerning the dead would be that they had sinned, and that Divine retribution had come upon them. Jesus tells them that their belief in this matter is wrong, and yet that sin will bring calamity and disaster upon themselves.

The question which exercised the minds of the pious Jews was, Why did God allow sinners to continue in their sin? Why did He not blot them out of existence? Whether the story of Abraham and his intercession for Sodom is the background upon which the answer is based, is not easy to say; but certainly Judaism believed that the world was allowed to go on because of the righteous few that are found in it. Even to this day this belief is persisted in. Having been brought up in a Cabalistic home and among Cabalists, I was early told that there were living in the world thirty-six righteous; they are not known to any but themselves. If these thirty-six meet together and can contrive to live together for a whole day without committing a single sin, the Messiah will come. Meantime the world continues to exist only because of them. That this point of view had a reassuring effect upon those who asked the

question, and still ask it, I have no doubt. Apart from the fact that we believe in the free-will of ourselves and our fellow-creatures, the parable may help to provide an answer for our own questionings on the matter.

Jesus takes the fig tree as a means of illustration. It is a common practice in Galilee to set both fig and olive trees in the vineyards at given distances of, say, one hundred feet. The reason is a purely economic one. If the vine crop fails, the olive or the fig helps out, and on the whole these trees are more dependable than is the vine. Bad years in the vineyards recur every third or fourth year, and the fig and olive trees are then relied on. It might be thought that the vine crop being uncertain, and, on the whole, not so remunerative as the fig or the olive, it would be wise to go in for olives or figs exclusively. But here again the economic question is the determining factor. Both olive and fig trees take a considerable time to mature, and few farmers can afford to lie out of their capital so long; so that mixed crops (either vineyards and olive or fig trees, or olive orchards in which wheat is grown) are the rule.

In the case of our parable, the farmer was not working the land himself, but had some one to work it for him. For three years

running he had come to his vineyard seeking fruit, but had found none on the fig tree, and he suggested to his worker to cut the tree down. Why three years are used in the parable is not clear. The overseer, or the working man to whom the owner suggested the cutting down of the tree, pleaded for it to get another chance. He would dig it about and manure it, and if it did not respond, he would then cut it down. We may safely conclude that the owner agreed to that suggestion.

What then is the lesson of the parable? Most of the commentators and writers on the parables have taken the parable to teach the withdrawal from the Jews of their privileges. It is difficult to follow this reasoning. Remember: The parable is the result of news of a sad nature, upon which the Master comments from the viewpoint of association of sin and calamity. He refutes the common belief that these two things have the association implied, for, if that were the case, His hearers would be subject to the same punishment, for they were as sinful as the people who thus suffered. The parable follows. The Lord of the vineyard, having a perfect right to expect fruit on his fig tree, suggests, but does not command, that the tree be cut down, as it continues to be fruitless. The

grieve begs for time ; he will dig it round and manure it, and it is quite possible that this will revive the fruit-bearing of the tree. To conclude from that, that the parable had anything to do with Israel's fruit-bearing, seems to me not only a fanciful interpretation but a distorted view of historical Christianity. Commentators seem to forget that it was the apostles and Paul who propagated Christianity, and, if they were anything, they were Jews. Official Judaism was barren, but it never was anything else in so far as the vineyard of the Lord was concerned. I suggest that the parable is designed to give the reason for the Divine patience with the world of sin and suffering. The reason is that the workers of the vineyard may have the joy of inducing fruit-bearing in barren souls. The Reformation revolted against Tetzel and his indulgence vendors, and Puritanism found no place for the prayers of the Saints, and so far as they were concerned, this was almost inevitable. If we, however, investigate the position again, we may find something more than appears on the surface. The tree of our parable is left " to cumber the ground " for a year longer, that the vine-dresser may have the joy of inducing it to bear fruit. May this not also be the case in life ? The Divine patience

with sin and the sinner may be in part due to the love of God for His saints. It is their privilege that their lives may be made useful for His Kingdom. There may, of course, be a hidden meaning in the parable which I cannot see. It may have been meant for the Jews specially, or for the Gentiles. But taking it on the same basis as the other parables, and subjecting it to the same test, it does not seem necessary to go looking for hidden and non-apparent meanings. The lesson which stands out is one which should bring comfort to the earnest toilers in the Lord's vineyard, and, if taken to heart, should deepen the consciousness of the toilers as to both their privilege and responsibility. It should make them feel the burden of souls laid upon them by the Divine patience, and should induce them, if inducement be necessary, to work with might and main for the salvation of our sin-stricken and barren world. I may be mistaken in my reading of the parable, but, looking at it from the viewpoint that I do, it speaks to my heart as a labourer in the vineyard, and encourages me, as well as causes me to tremble, at the goodness of God. It does not seem impossible that barren lives are just a challenge to the faith of the workers in the garden of the Lord. Here is a lesson to us not to despair but

patiently to work on, and, whatever the result, not to weary. If a barren life becomes fruitful, it will bring its reward in the joy of the steward ; if it does not, it will be removed in the Owner's good time.

XV

THE VIRTUE OF HUMILITY

LUKE xiv. 6–14

And they could not answer again unto these things.

And he spake a parable unto those that were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief seats ; saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any man to a marriage feast, sit not down in the chief seat ; lest haply a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him, and he that bade thee and him shall come and say to thee, Give this man place ; and then thou shalt begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest place ; that when he that hath bidden thee cometh, he may say to thee, Friend, go up higher. Then shalt thou have glory in the presence of all that sit at meat with thee. For every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled ; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

And he said to him also that had bidden him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, nor thy kinsmen, nor rich neighbours ; lest haply they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, bid the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind : and thou shalt be blessed ; because they have not wherewith to recompense thee : for thou shalt be recompensed in the resurrection of the just.

IT is said of Moses that he was the humblest of men. " Now the man Moses was very meek,

above all the men that were upon the face of the earth" (Num. xii. 3). It may be said of the great Hillel that he was equally humble ; and it is perhaps just to say that all the truly great Jews, like all great men of other nations, were, and are to-day, of humble disposition, knowing one thing most thoroughly—namely, that what they know is but a drop in the vast ocean in comparison with what is yet to be learned and what transcends human understanding.

The value of knowledge of the law was so highly esteemed that a student of it received the greatest respect and reverence. While this honour was rightly offered to worthy men, some, less worthy, looked for it, and even demanded it. They deemed themselves entitled to consideration and to places of honour. The very Commandments themselves did not stand in the way when their vanity or interest was concerned. Thus one of the Rabbis has enjoined it upon a son, whose father and Rabbi were in prison for debt, to pay the Rabbi's debt first and then the father's, if he could ; or again, if a son should meet his Rabbi and his father laden with burdens, his first duty was to relieve the Rabbi of his burden.

The question of occupying seats of honour,

in public as well as in private, was also a point in which the Rabbi sometimes offended against good taste. Judaism of the post-exilic period was very loyal to its religious leaders, and even to-day, in spite of its drift from Rabbinic authority, there is no more loyal people than it is to its Rabbis. Yet some of the Rabbis have forfeited that loyalty by their arrogance, forgetting that any man worthy of honour receives it ungrudgingly from the people; this, at least, has been my observation both in Judaism and Christendom. In Judaism it is a custom that, when a famous Rabbi, on his journey, arrives at a place on the Sabbath eve (Friday night), he is invited to the house of the leading citizen, and offered the kindly hospitality of the house. The following day, after morning prayers, the host invites some of his fellow-townsmen to share with him the joy of hearing the Rabbi expound some Scripture or set forth some great lesson on human conduct.

I may add, in passing, that hospitality is not only extended to the Rabbis but to any wayfarer that may come into the town or village. Strangers, as a rule, find seats near the back of the raised dais from which the law is read, and the people do not leave the Synagogue on Friday night till they have

made sure that all strangers are accommodated with hospitality.

The setting of our parable lies in some Galilean village to which Jesus had come with His disciples.

It often happens that the house of the host is not large enough to lodge the disciples too. The disciples are lodged in various houses, but on Sabbaths come for their food to the house of the person where the Rabbi is staying.

Apart from the breakfast, which consists only of coffee or milk, there are two meals —dinner and an afternoon meal called the 'Third Meal' (Shal-osh Se-i-da). After the midday and third meals, the Rabbi expounds some Scripture, and the disciples at times are allowed to ask questions about difficult passages in the Law or prophets, which the Rabbi explains. After the return from the Synagogue at night (the third prayer having been said when three stars had appeared), a feast known as the feast of saying 'good-bye' to the 'Queen'—that is, the Sabbath—is celebrated. The disciples are generally present in the house of the host for this ceremony.

The people who gathered at the house of the host of the Master on this Sabbath were not all there to learn from what would fall from those precious lips, but some were there

to watch Him, and see if they could entrap Him in His words. He gives them an opening by curing a sick man, but they had evidently heard that some who sought to join issue with Him on this score had been effectively answered, and they hold their peace. The Master's eye was always open to human actions, kindly or otherwise, and He noted the fight for the places of honour among these people, and He takes the opportunity afforded Him by the customs of the people to teach them a lesson in humility.

The parable is as plain as it is true to life. Wait till others appoint your seat, and you will never need to take a back seat. Some one has to occupy the seat of honour; but the self-appointed leader will find that his place is wanted for one entitled to the position. Let those who have the right to appoint the seats give you the place of honour if they wish. Self-exaltation rides for a fall, and blessed is he who can take the foot of the table and by Christlike gentleness and true humility make it the head, because the Master is there living and breathing through him.

Having taught the art of true humility to the self-seeking guests, the Master turns to the host and tells him the meaning of true

hospitality. While the lesson to the host does not, strictly speaking, belong to the substance of the parable, it is not out of place to devote a paragraph to it, because of its bearing on the parable that follows.

Rashi, in commenting on Gen. xlvii. 29, asks, What is the meaning of the phrase, "And thou shalt do with me (act toward me) kindness and truth"? He himself explains the meaning as the type of action which does not hope for reward. The Master, in His own inimitable way, tells His host that invitations issued to such as cannot reward him are true charity, and this He recommends him to practise. The simple but gracious advice finds a response in the heart of one of the guests, who gives the Master a text for His further discourse, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God."

XVI

THE CONSEQUENCE OF REFUSED INVITATIONS

LUKE xiv. 16–24

But he said unto him, A certain man made a great supper ; and he bade many : and he sent forth his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come ; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuses. The first said unto him, I have bought a field, and I must needs go out and see it : I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them : I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. And the servant came, and told his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor and maimed and blind and lame. And the servant said, Lord, what thou didst command is done, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and constrain them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, that none of those men that were bidden shall taste of my supper.

THE person with the understanding heart, who envied the partakers of the feast in the Kingdom of God, needed enlightenment of the mind, and the Master furnished the enlighten-

ment. It is ever a mystery to the Christian how men can refuse the loving invitation of God to share in the blessings of a life that is provided by Him with all good things. It is an insoluble riddle how people reject the free offer of God's hospitality.

The Master explains to the man who had caught a glimpse of the blessedness of the Kingdom, how blind, selfish and callous human nature is. So far as the local colouring of the parable is concerned, little need be said. Great suppers, such as are set forth in the parable, are not infrequent occurrences in Jewish life. There are many special religious functions in Jewish life which offer occasions for feasting, such as the eighth day after the birth of a male child, when he is made a son of the covenant, or the thirteenth year in the life of a boy whose father and mother are both alive, because during that year the boy becomes " a son of the law," or, as the people say, " responsible for his own sins." The orphan boy enters upon this responsibility a year earlier. I wonder if the notice in Luke, that Jesus was about twelve years of age when He went up to Jerusalem, carried significance with regard to the attitude of His parents to His status? Besides the functions mentioned, suppers are given as marks

of thanksgiving for a restored dear one, or for the return of a loved one from a perilous journey, or for success in an undertaking; all these things call forth a spirit of fellowship, which expresses itself in the feasting of friends, while money is given to the poor in addition to food. Some commentators will have it that this parable and the one in Matt. xxii. 1–14 are one and the same parable. I am unable to accept that view for many reasons, which will be fully stated when we come to the other parable.

The making of a great supper was not so uncommon as to necessitate the conclusion that it could only be used once in illustrating a great principle. The man of the parable made the supper for his friends, from which, of course, the poor would not be excluded; for the principle of the lesson that the Master set before His host was not new, but, like so many other things, received new emphasis at an opportune moment. The friends who had been invited give reasons for absence which, of course, are but polite ways of refusing to attend. One cannot grow eloquent at the folly of the supposed reasons as some have done, the fact of the matter being that the excuses are true enough to our Palestinian life. A man may well buy a yoke of oxen

before trying them, or he may buy a piece of land without knowing every part of it. As for the one who had just taken unto himself a wife, he surely had more than an excuse. Some commentators seem to forget that the matter they are dealing with is of a parabolic nature, and that, while it may not be based on a given case actually within the experience of the narrator, it is on the whole true to life. The parties in the parable of Nathan did not exist outside his own thoughts, but were, nevertheless, such as life could well produce.

Since those who had been invited had refused, and the refusal was due to an unwillingness to do honour to the host, the question is, Who do these parties represent in life? Some have taken the invited guests to allude to the Jewish nation; but the necessity for such a conclusion is not obvious. The Jewish nation, as I have already pointed out, did not reject the invitation *en masse*. Some accepted it; the very fact of the existence of Christianity to-day points to that. The invited guests represent Jew and Gentile who, because of their attachment to the things of this world, slight the invitation of the Kingdom of God. The maker of the supper does what Jesus had recommended His host to do. He sends out his servants to

bring in those to whom the supper would indeed be welcome—the publicans, sinners, and those who were despised by official Judaism. And the application which follows in verse 14 is a very serious one, that those who reject the invitation shall be utterly refused part and share in the supper should they change their minds and wish to come. I do not think that we can press the conclusion too far, or treat it too literally. The fact of the matter, as it is set forth in this parable, shows that the invitation had been issued to these folk ; and as the rejection was a voluntary act on their part, it may appear just to us that they should be refused any part in the supper, but our sense of justice is not God's.

XVII

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

JOHN X. 1–17

Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth ; and the sheep hear his voice : and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. When he hath put forth all his own, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him : for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him : for they know not the voice of strangers. This parable spake Jesus unto them : but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.

Jesus therefore said unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that came before me are thieves and robbers : but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door : by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and go out, and shall find pasture. The thief cometh not, but that he may steal, and kill, and destroy : I came that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd : the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep. He that is a hireling, and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, beholdeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth, and the wolf snatcheth them, and scattereth them : he fleeth because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd ; and I know mine own, and mine own know me, even as the Father knoweth me, and I know the

Father ; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold : them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice ; and they shall become one flock, with one shepherd. Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again.

Most authorities have questioned the claim of this passage to inclusion among the parables. It must be agreed that, in the main, it lacks the characteristics of the Synoptists' parables, and in the Aramaic the word which was used for this passage was 'Methal,' which the Greek translator of John has rightly translated 'Proverb' (Paroimia), and is restored by the revisers in a marginal rendering. I am not prepared to argue that the passage is parabolic in the strict sense. The reason for its inclusion here, and its intrinsic value, lies in the fact that it is the only passage in John which comes near the parabolic type.

The Background

The story of the man who was born blind and was cured of his blindness by the Master is too well known to need any comment. The result of this act of mercy on the part of the Master was to bring Him into conflict with the authorities.

We have in this incident a repetition of

the conflict at the beginning of the Galilean ministry, when the authorities said, " If we cannot persuade the people against the facts, we will say He has a demon and is in league with the evil one." The authorities apparently carried their opposition to a length which is barely credible, for they tried to convince the cured man himself that Jesus had really no power to cure him. The cured man, however, was equal to the occasion, and his answers in cross-examination contain some of the finest flashes of wit and humour in the Bible. The authorities, then, thought to frighten the man's parents into a lie, but they fared no better there.

All their wiles having failed, they rebuke the cured man with true rabbinic insolence, " You who were born in sin, do you dare teach us who are in the seat of Moses and the prophets ? "

To the Master this utter perversity was very galling. He repeats, in less gentle phrase, the nature and consequence of their wilfulness : " You say you see. In that case your opposition is wilful and malicious. You are sinning against the light, and your sin is unforgivable."

Jesus then turns to the passage in question in which He tells them in metaphor, or parable,

the actual state of things. "You are thieves and robbers, and that is why the sheep pay no heed to your calls; you are hirelings, I am the Good Shepherd. Had you been true shepherds, you would have been able to lead the flock."

The Sheep-Fold

As a rule the sheep are brought into a field at night-time. Two reasons make this difference between East and West necessary.

I. The Eastern sheep are milk-producing, and it is therefore necessary to bring them to a given place to milk them. The Bedouin exists to a large extent on this milk. It is turned into 'leban' (sour milk) and forms a very cooling drink. It is also made into butter, which is the main kitchen article. The butter is boiled up in the summer and is made into what is known as *seman*, and this takes the place of oil, which is mainly used for cooking among the Jews.

II. The second reason for bringing the sheep into some enclosure is that there they can be guarded, both from wild beasts and from robbers, during the darkness. Outside the enclosure the family tent was placed, but one of the family of the shepherd sleeps inside the enclosure. In the case of nomadic tribes, the

sheep would be collected into some sheltered place and there watched the whole night. In the case of villagers, the courtyard in front of the house would be used, and locked at night. To come into the fold except by means of the small door which is used is a sure indication of the nefarious business that the intruder is there for. The man inside the fold allows no strangers to enter, without making sure of their right. It is a very unusual thing for any one, except the shepherds, to seek admission to the fold.

The Sheep

It is a well-known fact that the sheep become attached to the shepherd, and get to know his voice. The great similarity of these animals to one another would make one think it impossible to know the one from the other, but that is not the case. I have known flocks of as many as five or six hundred to be known individually to the shepherds. In every flock some find special favour, and are adorned with a bell. The bell acts not only as an ornament, but as a guide to the whereabouts of the shepherd, for the belled sheep always follow close at the heels of the shepherds, who give them the choice morsels

which they find. More often than not these sheep are either named the pitied, ' Rachme,' or the beloved, ' Chabibe.' I feel sure that I am safe in saying that what is meant by " he calleth his own sheep by name " (John x. 3) does not indicate that they each have a name, but that each has some distinctive mark such as a black spot, or a short ear, or something of that nature. Very few have endearing names ; very often the day of birth, or the month, is given as the name.

Sheep in the East are never driven. The belled sheep, which are never very far from the shepherd, act as guides to the flocks, and they follow blindly.

To those who are in perplexity and do not know where to turn for leadership, the claims of Jesus to lead are worthy of consideration.

Here are some of the things which Jesus offers to those who would follow Him :

" Follow me, and I will cause you to become fishers of men " (Mark i. 17).

" One thing thou lackest : go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven : and come, follow me " (Mark x. 21).

" Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. . . . Verily, I say unto you, There is no man that hath

left house, or brethren, or sisters, or mother, or father, or children, or lands, for my sake, and for the gospel's sake, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last first" (Mark x. 28–31).

"If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke ix. 23).

"I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John viii. 12).

Some of the things entailed in following Jesus are not very conducive to the acceptance of His invitation; but the last passage cited is significant, and goes to the heart of the whole question. Thoughtful men and women will not follow blindly as sheep. To follow Jesus is, therefore, not to follow blindly, but to follow in the full light of the revelation of God.

Until man is liberated completely from blind instincts of the past, Jesus alone offers him a leadership which leads to the haven of his true and ideal goal.

I have on several occasions been present

when shepherds have been calling their sheep together for the homeward journey. Very often, for the sake of company or good conditions of pasture, they bring their flocks to the same fields, and especially to the same watering-places. (The pasture lands in Palestine are free, and, as a rule, are on the mountains and valleys in which nothing but grass and shrubs grow.) They, of course, try to keep their sheep separated, not always successfully, but it is surprising how the sheep respond to the shepherd's call. The shepherds have different kinds of calls. A call that is strange to the sheep they do not heed at all. The lesson is significant.

The spiritual sense of the parable is set forth in unmistakable language in verses 7–18. I will only relate an incident within my own knowledge, to illustrate verses 7 and 18. A shepherd we had by the name of Mustapha left us, and went to look after a herd on the slopes of Mount Canaan ; a short while afterwards I heard he was dead. I inquired the cause of his death, and was told that a leopard killed him. The whole story was as follows : A leopard had been preying on his flock and killed many of his sheep, and, as the shepherds were not allowed to carry guns, the killing of the leopard was very difficult. Mustapha,

however, could not bear to see his flock depleted by the wild beast, so he made himself a coat of sheepskin and wandered round on the edge of his flock, waiting for the leopard's return. One day, soon after, he became aware that the beast was approaching, and got down on his hands and knees and crawled on all fours, holding in one hand a very long knife, or dagger. When the leopard was near, it sensed the human who was playing the sheep, and made straight for him. Mustapha was ready for it, and struck it hard and in a vital spot, but before the brute expired, it killed the shepherd. Our Good Shepherd laid down His life with joy, for He knew how much that would mean to the world. He not only laid down His life voluntarily, but He laid it down that He might take it up again. Our further observation is that He tells us that He did it of His own free will. It was not a case of satisfying the demands of God, or of the Devil, but He did it for the love of His sheep.

When one gathers up the points of this parable, the purpose of it and its teaching stand out with great clearness. The authorities who claimed to be the shepherds of Judaism had miserably failed to lead, because they were false to the people. They would not put themselves out in any way for the sake

of the sheep. But the Good Shepherd was come Who would go all the way in service and sacrifice.

The authorities' answer to the Master was characteristic of their mentality: "We cannot silence Him; we cannot control the people any longer; we must kill Him." But His time was not yet come. They could not take His life at their wicked pleasure. He had yet much to do and teach. When He thought the case demanded it, He walked boldly up to lay down His life, not at their will but at His own.

This parable brought matters to a crisis, and, while He went about for four more months feeding His flock, in the end, when His work was done, He set His face to go up to Jerusalem to lay down His life that ours might be life more abundant.

XVIII

JOY IN FINDING OF THE LOST

LUKE xv

Now all the publicans and sinners were drawing near unto him. And both the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

And he spake unto them this parable, saying, What man of you, having a hundred sheep, and having lost one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and his neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.

I say unto you, that, even so, there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine righteous persons, who need no repentance.

Or what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a lamp, and sweep the house, and seek

MATT. xviii. 12–14

How think ye? if any man have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and go unto the mountains, and seek that which goeth astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth over it more than over the ninety and nine which have not gone astray.

Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

diligently until she find it ? And when she hath found it, she calleth together her friends and neighbours, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost. Even so, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

And he said, A certain man had two sons : and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of thy substance that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country ; and there he wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that country ; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country ; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat : and no man gave unto him. But when he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish here with hunger ? I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight : I am no more worthy to be called thy son : make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But while he was yet afar off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight : I am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth quickly the best robe, and put it on him ; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet : and bring the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat, and make merry : for this my son was dead, and is alive again ; he was lost, and is found.

And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field : and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called to him one of the servants, and inquired what these things might be. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come ; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and

sound. But he was angry, and would not go in : and his father came out, and entreated him. But he answered and said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, and I never transgressed a commandment of thine ; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends : but when this thy son came, who hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou killedst for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that is mine is thine. But it was meat to make merry and be glad : for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again ; and was lost, and is found.

It is not easy to find words which would fittingly sum up this superb series ; the best thing is to let them, severally and collectively, speak for themselves. If the Gospel of Luke had contained no other additional matter save the two latter parables of this series, it would have justified its existence as a separate Gospel.

The Matthæan parable is no doubt the same as the Lucan, and in the ultimate analysis teaches the same lesson, though it is applied to a different situation and has its own charm.

The Background

There must have been something very tender in the Master's dealing with the outcasts of Israel to have attracted them in the manner reported in the Gospels. The two classes mentioned by St. Luke, 'the publicans

and sinners,' the former for political reasons, the latter for religious reasons, were hated by the Scribes and Pharisees. It is unjust to conclude that there was no sympathy for them among the better type of Jewish teachers; the great schools of Hillel and Shamai, especially the leaders of these schools, had a warm regard for these unfortunate folk. But the ordinary Scribe and Pharisee had no place in their creed or hearts for the fallen of Israel.

We can have little hesitation in granting the statement of the opening verses of Luke's chapter to be true, for apart from its being brought out in the other Gospel, it stands to reason that the authorities in Palestine would not be kindly inclined to Jesus if He allowed these folk to gather round Him. We may further expect that He would have an answer for them, of an explanatory character.

Generally speaking, it is true to say that Judaism, while hard on the fallen, had yet a great deal of pity for them. The repentant was held in high honour. A 'Baal teshuba,' that is, a repentant sinner, was regarded as destined to great reward in the future. It is even true to say that he was counted more worthy than a righteous person. But what Judaism failed to do was to put forth effort

to bring these wanderers back to the fold, and that was the cause of offence which is at issue in the parables.

The parties over whom the dispute arose were two—'publicans' and 'sinners.' While the latter we have with us, and so need not go into any description of them, the former were a class peculiar to the times of the Master's ministry.

The Publican

These people were objectionable to the Jews for more than one reason, but mainly because their occupation was one of gathering taxes and custom duties, etc., for the hated Romans. This could not be tolerated by such an intensely nationalistic people as were the Jews. No nation is charitably inclined to those of its own people who help a usurping power to exact money from it, and, if nationalism is ever pardonable, it certainly was so in the case of the Jews in the time of Christ. Alexandra, widow of Alexander, who reigned from 104, succeeded her husband in 78 B.C. On her coming to the throne she placed the Pharisees in power. Her younger son (Aristobulus) favoured the Sadducees. On the death of his mother in 69 B.C. Aristobulus deposed his

elder brother Hyrcanus, but Aretes of Arabia and Antipater of Idumea took up Hyrcanus's cause. Both parties then appealed to the legate of Syria Scaurus, who (in 66 B.C.) restored Aristobulus. In 63 B.C. Pompeius was called to arbitrate between the parties. Pompeius did not merely arbitrate, but deposed Aristobulus, desecrated the Holy of holies, and deprived the Jews of the sea-coast and inland Gentile cities, which were made tributary to Rome. Hyrcanus was appointed high priest only, the title of King being lost, and the whole country subordinated to the Governor of Syria.

To have taken possession of the land as Pompeius and the Cæsars did was not honourable ; but in any case, the Jew, with his national outlook upon life, would have hated any heathen people ruling over him. It was bad enough to be ruled by Rome, but to have Jews aiding the Romans was intolerable. Patriots regarded the publicans as contemptible traitors. No decent Jew, they held, would exact tribute from their co-religionists for Rome.

The publicans themselves did not help their cause with the people, for they were often vindictive and stupid. As a rule, the men who accepted this position were not of the

best repute. They suffered many indignities ; they were excluded from the ordinary Synagogues ; they were made ineligible as witnesses in the courts ; and in many other ways they bore the brunt of their choice. It does not, of course, follow that all the publicans, or aiders of the Romans, were bad men, nor even that the majority of them were. So far as their religious life went, some of them indeed were good enough men. We read of at least two good publicans in the Gospels — Levi and that other who was heard praying in the Temple. We have to recognize that the Jews, so far as their light went, could hardly have done anything else than despise the publicans, and it would have been unreasonable on the part of Jesus to take exception to this, save in the way He appears to me to do in these parables.

The kindly attitude of the young Teacher of Nazareth drew these despised people to Him. The statement that the folk gathered around Him and were drawn to Him is no exaggeration, for, if Jesus was what the Gospels claim Him to have been, and His attitude to the despised what we are assured was, then their seeking the company of us and attendance upon His preaching as most natural. They would be attracted

by His generous sympathy with them, a feeling which had no place in the outlook of official Judaism, though individuals like the great Hillel certainly displayed both great tenderness and patience with their fallen brethren.

The Local Setting

One would have expected the order of the parables to be different. There would seem to be more logical movement in an order of (1) the coin; (2) the sheep; and (3) the son. This order would further suggest itself from the viewpoint of value. But the answer may be found in reasoning that the Master only used the coin and son parables on this occasion, and that Luke found the parable of the sheep in Q, and added it to the other two which he had collected from other sources. Or it may be argued that the Master may have started the discourse with the sheep parable, which He had used before in order to arrest the attention of His hearers.

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

The subject of sheep or shepherd will always arrest the attention of a Jew, for were not the Patriarchs shepherds, and was not

their beloved David a shepherd? There is a story told in the Midrash in its comment on Ex. iii. 1, that while Moses was tending the flocks at Jethro, a sheep was lost. Moses went after it, and found it near a spring. Thinking that it would tire easily, he put it on his shoulders and carried it to the flock; and Jehovah, seeing this, said, "If Moses is so careful of his sheep, how much more will he be of My people? I will make him a shepherd of Israel."

One thing that does surprise is that the Master should take it for granted that His hearers would be conversant with the methods of the shepherds. It may be that He relied on them calling to mind the story of Moses, or He took it for granted that they knew the laws governing the shepherd's contract. While the average townsman is not, as a rule, well versed in the details of the pastoral life, yet, in this respect, they may have known a good deal. Owing to the very strict laws as to the separation of the milk and meat diets, many pious Jews keep goats, sheep or cows in order to make sure of having legally clean milk. (The Palestinian fat-tailed sheep are good milk-sheep and have plenty of milk of a very rich nature and good quality.) All those townspeople who have sheep, goats or

cows herd them with a community shepherd, who calls for them every morning and brings them back every evening. The shepherd gets a monthly wage and is responsible for the welfare of the animals entrusted to him. If an animal takes sick, he is obliged to bring it home ; and, if it dies, he must bring back the skin in such a condition that the owner may be able to judge if the animal was wilfully harmed. Failing this, the shepherd has to pay for the animal. The sight of a shepherd bringing a sheep home would thus not be strange to the people. Such a sheep or goat must be carried, if progress is to be made. The objection, sometimes raised, to the shepherd leaving the ninety and nine unguarded, and going after the single sheep, shows a misunderstanding of the situation. I have never seen in Syria, Palestine or Mesopotamia a flock attended by a single person. Two, and even three, shepherds are commonly employed. When one sheep is lost and the shepherd goes to seek it, the other shepherd takes the flock home. On arrival, the neighbours would at once notice the absence of the shepherd, or they would be told of it, for, apart from the possibility of the loss of the animal, it is often a question of the safety of the man. Should he encounter a wild beast,

a single-handed shepherd, with only his stick and sling, is in a perilous predicament. The finding and bringing home of the lost sheep is, therefore, a matter of great thanksgiving in the community.

Just a word as to the method of searching after the lost sheep. As soon as the sheep have turned on their homeward journey, the chief shepherd posts himself at a point from which he can count them. If he finds that any are missing, he tries to ascertain which one it is, and immediately sets off in search for it. He goes over the ground which has been covered during the day, watching very carefully for stray footprints. Most of the Palestinian shepherds are great experts in following footprints. (I know of one case in which a donkey was stolen and the shepherd followed the tracks from near Safad to Sidon, a two days' journey.) If he should come across the footmarks of a sheep which had wandered from the flock, he would have no difficulty in tracing it. The sheep also help themselves when lost, for, as soon as they become aware of being separated from the flock, they start bleating. This is a great aid to the shepherd in finding them.

The parable speaks of the joy in presence of the angels.

It is difficult to say how far Jesus used the belief of the times with regard to angels to illustrate His teaching. Judaism had an elaborate angelology. Three main sections of these beings were part of the doctrine: (1) 'Malachai A'phanim' (The Angels of the Presence); (2) 'Malachai A'sharoth' (The Angels of Service); (3) 'Malachai A'shemero' (The Guardian Angels). These last were considered as the angels of the individual; each Jew had his own angel, who accompanied him through this world's pilgrimage. On going to sleep, each child was, and is still, taught to pray for the presence during the night of Michael on the right-hand side, Gabriel on the left-hand side, and the Shekinah at the head of the bed. If you injured any one, you injured his angel, who would avenge himself on you. The fact that the Angels of the Presence are mentioned is worthy of notice, because these are the *personal guardians* of Jewish belief.

It must be remembered that the doctrine of pity for living creatures was highly developed in Judaism; and Jesus' story would evoke the response, "Of course we would go to find the lost sheep because it is our duty to do so." The Master Himself takes it for granted that they would. The lesson then is summed up

in the saying that it is even so in the spiritual sphere. God seeks His lost sheep, and Jesus, the Good Shepherd, is doing just that. The simplicity of this lesson is often marred by sentimentalism, but with that we will take no issue. The main thing is to admit the necessity of seeking for the sheep. Thus the Master gains His point that it is natural to seek for that which is lost, because it is a living thing and we must be pitiful.

The second concerns a woman who had lost one drachma (valued at tenpence) out of her store of ten. The coin, some say, was part of the string which women in the East use for adornment. Such coins are used to this day for that purpose. The text does not suggest that the drachma was part of the woman's jewellery, but this in no way alters the lesson of the parable. The woman had lost the coin. Having inquired at every house she had visited that day, she turns to her own house. The house would consist of a single room built of earth, lime and straw. There would be no windows, and very little light. The floor of the house would be made of clay.

The finding of the coin was not to be an easy matter, and the woman was obliged to light the oil-lamp or candle and sweep the floor. This having been done, she found her

coin and ran to tell her neighbours of the find, and they rejoiced with her in that she had found what was lost.

The case here is no longer of a living creature which all would grant must be found, but that of a coin. The principle, however, is identical, for no one cares to lose his property. The intrinsic value may be small, but it is something that was his very own, and he will have no peace until he finds it.

Jesus now turns to the main thesis which He has so far only been leading up to. The case is no longer one of searching for that which is lost, but of the return, by his own volition, of a lost son. Jesus now turns His teaching to a source which lay very near His heart—the family. In this family there are a father and two sons. The characteristics of both sons are described with graphic and masterly minuteness. The younger of these is dissatisfied with his life in his father's house. He therefore proposes that his father should give him what in the end will become his. There is no law or custom among the Jews or Arabs which entitles the son to a share of the father's wealth while the father is alive. The younger son receives his portion, and, not long after, goes off to a far country and there wastes his substance in

riotous living. God's gifts are not interminable; they come to an end; and this son is reduced to the greatest possible extremity. He is glad to be employed as a swineherd, the most degrading occupation a Jew could follow. The Master took the extreme case, because it was necessary for His object-lesson.

Much has been said about the husks that this son would fain have eaten, and which none offered. It is worthy of notice that he could not help himself to the swine's food. It is fair to assume that the food in question does not mean the food in the pasture, but rather food which was given to the pigs on their return from the field; else the herdsman could have helped himself to it. Dr. Rendel Harris has an interesting note on the question in *The Expositor* for October 1924, pp. 301–304, entitled "The Carobs of the Sea." I have no doubt by 'carobs' is meant the Arabic 'Char-oob.' I have sought to trace the origin of the 'carob' confusion. I find that St. Jerome is responsible for it, and I am not surprised at the fact. The question is gone into with Dr. Harris's usual thoroughness, but I do not think he can receive unqualified acceptance for his views.

The Carob (Arabic, 'Char-oob,' the 'ch' pro-

nounced hard, as in 'loch') is known botanically as *Ceratonia siliqua*. In Britain it is best known by the name of 'locust-pod' or 'sugar-pod.' It is a flat, pulpy, bean-like pod about six to eight inches in length and about an inch to two inches wide. It is dark purple in colour, and contains a number of small, hard and highly polished seeds.

Chemically it is said to be made up of 70 per cent. carbohydrates, of which 28 per cent. is sugar, the rest being made up of albuminoids and fat.

In the Eastern Mediterranean countries, of which it is a native, it is used mostly for making syrup, in much the same way as various berries in Britain are used for making jam. It is exported in large quantities to Europe, where it is mainly used for fattening stock.

Dr. Harris is quite right about the two kinds of Char-oobs, and his suggestion that the reading should be emended to 'de silequis amaris' meets the case of the two kinds of Char-oobs. So far as Palestine is concerned, I can say that the Char-oob is not used for feeding cattle, but the nut called 'egoz Chazir' in modern Hebrew (Arabic, 'Bal-oot') is so used. It is an oval-shaped nut about two inches in length and three-quarters of an

inch to an inch in thickness. It tastes like a chestnut when eaten raw, but when baked it has a sweet taste. This nut is used for food for goats and sheep and also for swine; the very name of it is 'swine nuts.' It is used as human food only by the very poorest folk. I am, personally, of the opinion that this is the article alluded to in our parable. The Greek word 'Keration,' which means 'Little Horn,' would fit the description of this nut exactly. It certainly does not fit the 'Char-oob'; it is broad and crooked, and has a dark colour. A small horn is naturally not bent, no matter if it be sheep, goat or calf; when it is small it is straight, and thus in every way this is more likely to have been the article mentioned in our parable.

It is of importance to know whom the younger son of the parable represents. There can be little doubt as to that, if we take the whole drift of the parables; he represents the publican and sinner, especially the first-named. It is the publican that joins himself to a citizen of a far country. He served the Roman power, and little did he get for it in the way of food that keeps the soul; nearly everything was denied to these unfortunate beings. But we must not be too dogmatic, for the murmuring of the Pharisees and

Scribes concerned both publicans and sinners. The master-stroke and sharpest thrust of the parable is found in the description of the return. The father does not, indeed, go in search of his lost boy, though he might have done so with the full approval of even these murmurers, but his heart goes out to the boy. He is represented as watching for his return ; he believes the boy will come back. Then, in the most telling manner, Jesus describes the meeting of father and son. They who would look for a lost sheep, who would look even for a lost coin, what now of a lost child ?

Could any argument have been more logical, more to the point, and more unanswerably conclusive ?

The Application of the Teaching of the Parables

This is very full of problematic points. There can, of course, be no doubt that the main lesson the Master sought to bring out in the parables was His right to seek for that which is lost and the Father's right to receive His erring son back home, as against the contention that, since the younger had received his share of goods and wasted them, he had no further claims in the home. As has already

been pointed out, Jesus did not deny the right to penitence, but exalted it.

Is it not possible, however, that the series has a deeper meaning than what appears on the surface? Is it too much to suggest on the basis of the text that we have here three types of penitents?

I. There are those who become aware of their lost state, but have no power in themselves to rejoin the brotherhood, and are followed by the shepherd and brought back (what later theology called 'Synergism').

II. The case of the coin represents the man who has no volition of his own, and can in no way aid the seeker (the Infralapsarian or even Supralapsarian theology of the Reformers).

III. If words mean anything, do not the words of the parable of the son teach the freedom and capacity for repentance of the son? It is true that necessity compels him to think, but his act is an entirely voluntary act in which he is the sole agent (the Pelagian conception).

I submit that the inference drawn from the series is justifiable on the basis of the text of the parables. In the ultimate resort, the meaning of 'Repentance' in experience is that, while the individual cases differ, God meets every case in its own way. Human

nature is so varied that there is ample place for all the types which theology has striven to isolate for the purpose of its special viewpoint. Do not the very words—the Hebrew 'Te-shu-ba,' return, and the Greek 'Metanoeo,' to change one's mind or purpose—indicate co-operation? But it is unfitting that one should dogmatize on theological questions of such importance, though I myself find my own questions answered in the parable.

This last parable offers a wide field for speculation: namely, the journey of the son back, the aid he received by the wayside which made it possible for him to get back home, the question as to what ultimately the action of the elder brother was, and many other questions of a similar nature. But such speculation may be very misleading.

The parables vindicate Jesus' action in every respect. The father had given the son the right to his property, and though he had abused it, he still retained a place in his father's affections. The son came back of his own free will, and the father cannot do otherwise than be elated at the return.

The Master is often represented in 'conflict' with the Pharisees. It takes two to make a quarrel! "Son, thou art ever with me,

and all that I have is thine." These words are not the words of one seeking strife, but are characteristic of the gentle Teacher of Nazareth, Who came to seek and save that which was lost.

In conclusion, it is necessary to bear in mind that repentance itself is not an end, but a means to an end. The Divine joy looks forward to the time when the penitent will be presented faultless before the presence of God's glory.

XIX

THE INDIVISIBILITY OF FAITHFULNESS

LUKE xvi. 1–13

And he said also unto the disciples, There was a certain rich man, who had a steward ; and the same was accused unto him that he was wasting his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, What is this that I hear of thee ? Render the account of thy stewardship ; for thou canst be no longer steward. And the steward said within himself, What shall I do, seeing that my lord taketh away the stewardship from me ? I have not strength to dig ; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. And calling to him each one of his lord's debtors, he said to the first, How much owest thou unto my lord ? And he said, A hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bond, and sit down quickly and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou ? And he said, A hundred measures of wheat. He saith unto him, Take thy bond, and write fourscore. And his lord commended the unrighteous steward because he had done wisely : for the sons of this world are, for their own generation, wiser than the sons of the light. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness : that, when it shall fail, they may receive you into the eternal tabernacles. He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much : and he that is unrighteous in a very little is unrighteous also in

much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches ? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own ? No servant can serve two masters : for either he will hate the one, and love the other ; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

THE background of this parable is awanting, else it would make things much easier. So far as the lesson is concerned which it sets forth, it might be dealt with at any time, and on any occasion, with much profit.

Take the local setting of the parable.

The stewards, 'Nemanim,' form a necessary part of both commercial and agricultural activities.

The feudal system obtained in Palestine a very strong hold at the very earliest time, and while the prophets' ideal was "Every one under his fig tree and vine," that was a never-realized ideal. The small farmer was a tenant and seldom an owner. Even when he was an owner, he was too poor to be independent.

Borrowing was, and is, very common in Palestine, and a debt is seldom paid in money, but almost always in produce from the farm. A class of fairly wealthy people live upon the income derived from advancing money to farmers. As a rule, they belong to

powerful families ; that ensures the return of their capital with interest. Lending, without the backing of a strong family, would be a very hazardous business.

If you were to walk down any Palestinian bazaar, you would be struck with the number of shops that seem to contain little or nothing in the way of wares, and yet in the shops, or just outside of them, you would see a goodly number of people. You might ascribe it to the ease of the Eastern in business dealings, or might conclude that these folk were engaged in gossiping. But should you go near and listen to the conversation, you would find that these people are either borrowing or paying, or begging for more time to pay, their debts.

Quite a number of the lenders of money are unable to write, and it is the steward who has to do the writing and book-keeping, such as it is. The farmer seldom receives cash, but his clothes, his household goods and, indeed, everything of which he may be in need are supplied by the lender. Apart from the interest that the lender receives, part of the produce of the farm finds its way to the homes of the lender and the steward. Eggs, butter, fruit, and, from the nomads, a lamb or kid are expected whenever a visit is made to the town or village. The stewards are

well paid and are, as a rule, fairly honest ; their honesty, while often due to a real interest in their employer, may also be due to the fear of severe punishment by the members of the family of their employers—a serious matter when this family may consist of two or three hundred males who would each count the affair his personal business.

While the employer gives the credit necessary—usually goods obtained from various members of the family—the steward makes the bargain as to the amount of interest that is to be paid and the time of payment. The Eastern loves to take time over his bargaining, and finds greater delight than the Western should success crown his efforts.

More often than not contracts are made verbally, and there is seldom a dispute about overcharging ; but, occasionally, written contracts are entered into, the steward writing out the contract on a piece of parchment which is given to the borrower. The lender is never afraid of his capital ; he and the borrower know well that the loan will have to be paid in full, with the interest agreed on ; and I must say that there is a good deal more honesty of contract in the East, among the Easterns, than there is in the West. It may be that the methods of exacting payments

deter the borrower from dishonesty, but be the cause what it may, the parties are, generally, very clear about their contract, and so they keep free of litigation.

Now our parable concerns a master and his steward. And it must be realized that the Master takes, for His illustration, facts out of the common life of the people, and that, as is the case in our classical O.T. parables, the parties in the illustration probably existed only for the sake of the illustration, though their actions may be common usage. The steward was found to be dishonest, and was told that he must give up his stewardship: that does not often happen, but it is not altogether unknown.

The most fantastic cabalist can extract no meaning from the actual quantities concerned in the transactions. In the one case the debt amounted to 100 baths of oil (900 gallons). The steward wrote this down to 450 gallons. In the other case the debt was 100 core of wheat (1125 bushels). This was written down to 900 bushels. Notice that the steward did not stand to gain anything in the way of money. For one thing, the borrower would not have the money to give, and for another, if he had any money, he would naturally give it to the lender, for, in the long run, that

would bring him more advantage. The whole motive of the writing down was to make friends and establish a connection with the men whose debts he had reduced. On hearing of the action of his steward, the lender did what any wiseacre would do: he remarked to the man that he had acted cleverly.

The reason for this complacent recommendation is not far to seek. Since he had got to know about it, the borrowers would have to pay the original sums, and he would lose nothing. The first comment of the Master is, as always, short and to the point. Men use their wisdom, in the commercial world, to far greater effect than do men for the Kingdom of God. The business man is fully alive to the interest of his business, but the men whose whole lives are given to the Kingdom without reservation are as rare as precious stones.

The lesson is pointed. We cannot worship God and money at the same time. The folly of trying to do so is made evident by the Master's comment. The man of the story lost his position, and his end would not be a very pleasant one. A similar case came within my own knowledge. A steward who had feathered his own nest was dismissed from his employment. He started a business of his own, but no one would deal with him.

Every one argued exactly on the lines suggested by Jesus. If he was unreliable when dealing with his master's money, they said, he will be far more so when the money is his own. The man ended by losing his reason, and a pitiful object he was, as he passed along the streets. Two years later, death released him from his sufferings. The would-be friends failed him in the time of his need, and the money did not make him any eternal habitation.

The parable is a masterpiece of irony. It was set forth for the purpose of displaying the folly of man—how blind he is to his own interest when it is concerned with the Kingdom of God. Jesus asks for wholeheartedness, and too often He gets the instability and ineffectiveness that spring from the divided mind. The lesson of the parable, then, is this: honesty, faithfulness, righteousness are indivisible qualities. No man ought to seek to practise them half-heartedly. As Jesus said, "He who is faithful in very little is faithful also in much: and he who is unrighteous in a very little is unrighteous also in much."

He who would belong to the great brotherhood must love God with all his heart and with all his soul. If a man attempts to make the best of two worlds, all that he effects is

to lose both. The Master would have all men know that the Kingdom of God presents them with a mighty alternative; and when the choice is made for the Kingdom, He would have the children of light as wholehearted and devoted as the children of the world are to their worldly interests.

XX

NEGLECT OF OPPORTUNITY

LUKE xvi. 19–31

Now there was a certain rich man, and he was clothed in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day : and a certain beggar named Lazarus was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table ; yea, even the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and that he was carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom : and the rich man also died, and was buried. And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue ; for I am in anguish in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things : but now here he is comforted, and thou art in anguish. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, that they which would pass from hence to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from thence to us. And he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house ; for I have five brethren ; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. But Abraham saith, They have Moses and the prophets ; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham : but if one go to them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they

hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, if one rise from the dead.

It is not easy to decide whether this section of St. Luke is to be taken as a parable or not.

Taking everything into consideration, we include it among the parables, because it is in essence a story which teaches a moral lesson.

Chronologically, our parable belongs to the last four months of our Master's life (between the Feast of Dedication and the last Passover), and forms part of the special Lucan section. No clue is offered us by the writer concerning the background of the parable. One is tempted to ask if this parable is not a continuation of the thought set forth in the first parable of the chapter. The main lesson of that parable is the indivisibility of faithfulness. The details, however, concern themselves with the abuse of trust in money matters, and the uses some people think they can put money to. The steward thought he could make friends with his ill-gotten money, and the Master points out the fallacy of the steward's belief. The Master never confuses issues in the parables, but makes each one teach one outstanding truth. It often happens, however, that another important issue arises; and then He keeps it in the

background, and explains it fully in another parable. An example of that method is found in the first and subsequent series of parables. In the case before us, Luke saw no connection between the two parables, and interpolated the other material (verses 14–19). Or it may be that these verses do have special reference to what goes before, which we have as yet not grasped. Whichever may be the case, there is a continuity of thought in the two parables.

The parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man shows how wealth, when not used properly, may prove the undoing of its possessor.

The name of one of the persons concerned is given as Eliezer or, in Hellenized form, 'Lazarus' or 'Laazar,' which means 'God helped.' The name of the other is furnished by tradition as Dives, and in the Latin the word 'dives' means 'riches,' or 'rich.'

So our story, for such it is, starts by showing us at this rich man's gate a poor man covered with sores. He lived upon the charity of the people, and was placed, or more correctly 'cast,' where he might reasonably expect help—it is important to bear this fact in mind, because a good deal of the parable depends upon the fact. One may be overestimating the value of this word in one's

effort to reach some concrete teaching in the parable, but we must give these words their value if we are not to get too far afield from the facts as stated. The person then at whose gate this beggar was laid was rich and lived well. The poor man is described as in a most helpless condition physically, for "the dogs came and licked his sores." The rich man was not expected to take the beggar into his parlour. The beggar himself did not expect it. He desired nothing more than the remains of the rich man's meals, or, to put it in the graphic words of the parable, 'the fallings' or 'crumbs' from the table. But he evidently did not even get such things, and he died. It is not clear if death was due to starvation, but that implication is not excluded. While the story is a parable, its realism is not at all outside actual experience. Some rich men both of the East and the West are very callous. We need not speculate as to who the folk were that brought the beggar to the gate. If we were entitled to use our imagination in the matter, we might picture to ourselves a poverty-stricken family, on the verge of starvation, carrying this suffering member thither as a last hope.

In the case of the steward, his ill-gotten money brought its retribution ere long, and

in this life. But in the case of the two men in our parable, the settlement had to be made by Him Who is the avenger of the wronged, defenceless, poor and needy.

It is a little difficult to say how much of the material which follows is to be taken as fact and how much as illustrative matter, used merely to aid the mind to arrive at the lesson.

The rich man had an opportunity to use his riches for good, he neglected to do so, and a just judge condemned him to suffer for it. His wealth, which was his by right, was yet the means of his undoing, because he used it for purely selfish purposes.

The selfishness of the rich man is brought out very graphically in the request he makes to Abraham that Lazarus should go and tell his five brothers of the true state of things. Some people find in this request an indication of some good in the rich man ; I fail to see it. All I can see in this is the utter depravity of the rich man's nature. He who failed to relieve the hunger and suffering of his fellow-creatures, when he could have done it with the greatest of ease, now asks this man to go back into life, which was so unkind to him, that he might save his brothers from the just reward due to them if they were living such a life as he had lived.

The answer Abraham is made to give goes to the root of the problem, "Let them hear Moses and the prophets."

The parable of Acceptance of Opportunity showed us how inhuman the Law was in so far as its rules for the conduct of Priest and Levite towards their fellows were concerned. This parable tells us of the humane injunction of the Law and the prophets where the poor and suffering are concerned. No one who has any knowledge of the O.T. needs the quotation of passages to prove the truth of the statement which Abraham is made to give utterance to. Every prophet was a defender of the poor, and the Law is not lacking in injunctions in this respect. Ignorance will not be accepted as a plea from the neglectful rich, nor will they, because of their riches, be given any special consideration by God. They have to learn, and to do their duties as do other folk. They have their opportunities, and if they neglect them they have to reckon with God.

Let us who are seated in the place of Moses and the prophets, in all the humility of the Master Himself, preach to man this Gospel of life's opportunities, and make it quite clear that the gulf is impassable, and that once we have determined the course for ourselves, our

choice is ours, and we shall stand or fall by it. Let the ' Universalist ' read this parable very carefully and see what he can make of it. Let Roman Catholicism find a midway line in that gulf if it can. And let every honest reader of this parable be very clear that the present is ours, and the future is what we make it in the present. Let us all remember that privilege also means opportunity, and neglect of opportunity will be severely punished. And, in conclusion, let us be very careful in regard to the uses of wealth, for it is hard, though not impossible, for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of heaven. The use and abuse of money is not confined to those who are rich. The case of the steward shows how one who was not rich sold his honour for money. The rich man would seem to have relied on being saved by his money, and in his self-deception he failed to do the very thing which might have gone a long way towards saving him—namely, his using his wealth in the service of suffering and needy fellow-creatures.

XXI

RETRIBUTION, THOUGH SLOW, IS SURE

LUKE xviii. 1–8

And he spake a parable unto them to the end that they ought always to pray, and not to faint ; saying, There was in a city a judge, who feared not God, and regarded not man : and there was a widow in that city ; and she came oft unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while : but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man ; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest she wear me out by her continual coming. And the Lord said, Hear what the unrighteous judge saith. And shall not God avenge his elect, that cry to him day and night, and yet he is long-suffering over them ? I say unto you, that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth ?

THE judicial system of Judaism was thorough, sound and just. It could not be otherwise, for it was based on two strong and unfailing principles : it was just and democratic. In the time of the Master there were four courts.

I. The lowest was the village court, and it dealt with money differences between parties.

It consisted of three persons: each of the contestants selected a judge, and these two co-opted another; or perhaps the third judge might be selected by the two litigants.

II. Seven elders of the village, forming what is equivalent to our town council, dealt with cases arising from communal affairs and religious questions. Technically these seven persons were known as seven good men of the village, 'Shiv-ou To-vai Ha-ir.'

III. The smaller Sanhedrin, consisting of twenty-three persons, had authority in all judicial matters in towns outside Jerusalem, and, in the times of Jewish independence, dealt with criminal cases involving sentences of death. Its sentences could not be appealed from.

IV. The Sanhedrin proper, consisting of seventy-one members, with its seat at Jerusalem, had a jurisdiction which extended to the whole nation.

Under the Roman government of Palestine the power of the Sanhedrin was restricted in certain cases, notably in that of the death sentence.

The judge in our parable cannot have been a member of any of the courts mentioned, and the only conclusion we can reach is that he was either a police magistrate, appointed

by Herod, or a Roman judge. This would especially appear to be the case from the notice that he was afraid that the widow whom he was treating with no little injustice would come (as the Greek phrase suggests) and beat him till he was black and blue. Such a thing was impossible in the case of a Jewish judge, for even to curse one of them carried severe penalties.

The chief difficulty of the parable arises from the interpretation attached to it.

St. Luke, or some interpolator, has set forth his opinion at the beginning of the parable to the effect that men should not weary or faint in prayer; and in verse 6 the interpolator, or our original author, interrupts the parable to tell us the conclusion that Jesus drew. For my part, I am inclined to omit from the narrative both verses 1 and 6, but I am conscious of the danger of doing so—first, because, if this be resorted to here, it might be used indiscriminately elsewhere, and secondly, because I am conscious that I am prejudiced against the conclusion of the author or interpolator. . . . The question that we must ask ourselves and seek to answer is, What is the background of the parable? If chapter xvii. forms the background, then it is fairly easy to draw the lesson; but if it

does not, it is very difficult indeed, and must be left to predilection.

The point under discussion in chapter xvii. was the ordeal which was to overtake the Son of Man in Jerusalem. We are not concerned here with the question of how much, or how little, Jesus knew of His end. For my part, I hold that, even without being what He was, He could foresee the end in all its sombreness, but how to make others see was His task. The disciples still looked to Him for the restoration of the Kingdom of Israel and the bringing about of the Messianic era, and instead He was going to suffer death on the cross. Could such an end have anything but a disastrous effect upon His disciples? Would not the question arise in their minds, "If He was the Messiah, why did God allow Him to come to such a terrible end?" It was this question that was exercising the Master's mind, and the parable is spoken for the purpose of assuring them that, though the reckoning with the perpetrators of His death may be delayed, it will eventually come, and that meantime they must have faith that no wrong will go unpunished, but that retribution, though slow, is sure.

The principals of the parable are a judge and a wronged widow. As we have seen, the

judge must have been appointed by Herod, or by the Roman authorities. The widow was wronged, and presented her case to the judge; but it happened that he was a kind of man who neither feared God nor paid attention to the opinion of man. He refused to attend to the woman's case, but she, driven by the justice of her cause, continued to press her case upon him. Her continued application became an annoyance to him, and he began to be afraid of bodily violence, so he decided to avenge her wrong. The lesson, when summed up by the Master, is set forth in these words, "Shall not God avenge His own elect?" And the last word that the Master has to say about the matter is, "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth."

The reasoning of the parable, as I understand it, is as follows. Here is a judge, a person lacking in regard for God or man, who would not see that justice is done to a poor widow, who yet in the end, because of personal fear, administers justice; and shall not God, the just, holy and righteous One, administer justice? Shall He not avenge the wrongs done to His beloved Son?

Continuity of prayer and an unfainting faith are very desirable qualities in the

Christian, and one cannot but continue in them. But to make them a handle by means of which God is forced to comply with our requests is something which one cannot readily accept as the teaching of Jesus. As I take it, the problem dealt with in the parable is deeper, and goes to the root of much which perturbs our minds when we contemplate its issue. When wrong goes unavenged, does God reign in the earth ?

Retribution exercised the minds of the Greek poets and philosophers ; it exercised the minds of prophets and poets of the O.T., and it forces itself upon the thought of every serious person. The Master sets forth His answer by taking an extreme case. No justice can be expected from an unwilling, unjust and unscrupulous judge. That would be the natural conclusion, but the Master shows that the natural conclusion is wrong, and that even this most unlikely and improbable source does, in the end, yield retribution. The lesson ought to encourage us in the certainty that no wrongs will go unavenged, but that God's time is the best. As to the lesson which some people draw from the passage regarding the Parousia, I have nothing to say. I would only point to the answer which Jesus gave to those who asked

Him about the coming of the Kingdom, "Behold, the Kingdom of God is within you."

The question raised in the parable can have nothing to do with the question of our Lord's return, and we cannot conclude that all wrongs will go unpunished until then, though I am aware that some people do hold that all things shall be adjusted when Christ returns again and the dead are raised. For myself, I believe that Jesus has abolished death, and that those who are found in Him do not die, but are changed from the body of mortality to the state of immortality, and that God's judgment upon the wrongs committed by man is executed in His own good time and with His wisdom. But whatever the case may be, here or hereafter, now or in the far-distant future, justice will come as sure as God is God.

XXII

THE BASIS OF JUSTIFICATION

LUKE xviii. 9–14

And he spake also this parable unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and set all others at nought: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I get. But the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote his breast, saying, God, be thou merciful to me a sinner.

I say unto you, This man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

OUR parable raises many difficult problems.

The very title we have selected may be taken exception to. Those who trace Pauline influences in Luke's writings may argue that there is here a Pauline rather than a Jesus conception. Every reader of the N.T. is aware of the Pauline doctrine on the subject.

It is, therefore, necessary to call attention to the following facts before we proceed with our study of the contents.

I. Luke, or his informant, viewed the parable as one dealing with self-laudation on the one hand and self-abasement on the other. This is evident from the introductory and the closing verses. If this is the case, the idea of Pauline influence disappears.

II. Since Luke reports the parable in order to bring out the lessons mentioned, are we entitled in concluding that it teaches a different lesson? The answer is, that we are here concerned, not with what Luke teaches, but with what the Master Himself taught; and if it be granted that the parable is one which was taught by Jesus, then we must exclude from it verse 9 and the latter part of verse 14, and in the remaining verses alone we must look for the lesson. On what authority can we argue for the exclusion of verse 9 and the latter half of 14? Verse 9 is its own evidence; it speaks of Jesus in the third person. And since Luke sets out to prove the thesis of verse 9, it is not at all improbable that the latter half of verse 14 would be his own conclusion. In the ultimate issue, however, it does not make very much difference whether Luke added the latter

part of verse 14 or Jesus gave utterance to it; the lesson is clear in itself.

The persons introduced in our parable cannot be said to have been actual individuals observed in life, but were rather persons who typified the two classes they belonged to. The following considerations will show the reason for this conclusion.

I. It was not the habit of the Jewish people, during the lifetime of the Master, to go up to the Temple to make their common supplications. A careful study of the Temple and its services shows that, apart from the daily Psalms appointed for the Temple devotions, no prayers were offered there. Even the priests on duty went to a private part of the Temple to say the Shema (Deut. vi. 4 ff.).

II. In the account of the "cleansing of the Temple," the Master's charge is that the authorities had perverted the uses of the Temple (Matt. xxi. 13; Luke xix. 46).

III. The position in which the suppliants are described—"afar off"—would have prevented any one from hearing at one and the same time what each of them was saying. The phrase, "prayed with himself," has been taken by most students to mean that he prayed silently. Dr. Bruce naïvely remarks that no man would make such a prayer

audibly. Well, Dr. Bruce had evidently omitted to read through the Jewish prayer-book.

IV. We know that the publicans were not made very welcome in the Temple: in point of fact, they were even excluded from the ordinary Synagogues.

All this goes to show that the figure of speech in the parable is used to illustrate the attitude of a class of people rather than that of an individual.

Let us now turn to the actual contents of the prayers, bearing in mind that these prayers are put into the mouths of the parties by Jesus Himself.

The Prayer of the Pharisee

It is somewhat difficult to characterize the words made use of by the Pharisee as 'prayer,' though we find almost identical forms under the name of prayer at the present day.

The prayer opens with thanksgiving of an unusual character. The man thanks God for not being as other men, and goes one better by proceeding to enumerate those worse than himself. From this negative prayer he turns to lay emphasis on two positive supererogatory

acts—tithing and fasting twice a week. Both these acts were part of the Pharisaic creed.

By the Law a tenth of the fruits of the land were demanded (Deut. viii. 8). The Pharisee, however, gave one-tenth of all he possessed. Pharisaism, followed by latter Judaism, carried this principle to great extremes. The pious Jewess of to-day, before sending her dough to be baked, tithes it and burns it.

As to fasting, the Law commanded only one fast—that of the Day of Atonement; but Pharisaism had seventeen regular fasts apart from the bi-weekly fasts which were observed on Mondays and Thursdays. The origin of these fast days is difficult to trace, but tradition teaches that they were observed because Moses went up to the Mount to receive the commandments on a Thursday and returned on a Monday.

It may be added that special circumstances made these two days eminently fitted for fast days.

1. Mondays and Thursdays were the market days.

2. The provincial Sanhedrim (small), composed of thirteen or seven, met on those days.

3. Portions of the Law appointed to be read in the Synagogue on the following Sabbath were read on those days.

The Prayer of the Publican

This prayer is represented as being short and to the point: "God, be thou merciful to me a sinner!"

The attitude of the suppliant is graphically described: he was smiting his breast (a sign of acknowledgment of sin) and keeping his eyes on the ground (a sign of humility).

The Application of the Lesson

The Master proceeds to tell us that it was the publican rather than the Pharisee that was justified.

At the first glance, it is difficult to understand why the Pharisee should be denied justification. Surely any of us could honestly thank God for being preserved from the sins mentioned by the Pharisee, and as far as his acts of supererogation, there could have been nothing wrong in the acts themselves.

There is, however, the comparison which the Pharisee makes between himself and the publican. St. Luke makes this the direct object of the parable. The Pharisee dares to speak to God of despising his fellow-men.

The question has yet to be answered. In

what direction could the Pharisee seek justification under the Law save by adhering to it? He is made to claim not only strict adherence, but supererogation.

Yet the Master says that that which he sought he did not obtain. Why? No definite answer is given in our parable. The only means we have of arriving at an answer is by studying the form of prayer the publican is represented as having offered. The publican asks for mercy because of his sins. It follows, therefore, that justification is extended to the suppliant, not by reason of any achievement, but by the free gift of God's mercy. This, then, is the point of the parable. Justification depends upon the goodwill of God.

St. Paul arrived at the same conclusion, though starting from a different point. He saw plainly that the works of the Law could justify no living creature, and his solution was that the work of Christ supplies this need; but our parable teaches that the acknowledgment of one's sin leads to the extending of God's goodwill.

It might be asked, What is justification? In answer, it must be pointed out that justification does not imply that sin is justified, but that the sinner is. How that is

done is a matter for the theology of salvation to answer. Taking the thought by itself, justification means to declare just, right or upright. The whole lesson, then, is this: The Pharisee who lacked a spiritual appreciation of his relationship with God offered no channel for the transmission of God's mercy; whereas the publican, leaving unsaid all that he might have said concerning himself, in a true, penitential spirit, invokes the mercy of God as the ground for his justification, and thus established an avenue by means of which he can obtain the desired grace. That St. Paul should have reached the same conclusion as our parable offers, only goes to show that he followed the right line of reasoning.

We are indebted to St. Luke for the dual lesson he has brought out in the parable, and we cannot afford to neglect the warning, that none of us are able to offer to God anything worthy of justification, nor can we afford to look down upon our fellow-creatures who are not in our estimation as good as we. God alone is the Judge, and His mercy the free gift of His good pleasure. The lesson of humility we will learn more fully from the parable on True Humility.

XXIII

SERVICE AND REWARD

MATT. xx. 1–16

For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that was a householder, who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a shilling a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing in the market-place idle; and to them he said, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing; and he saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard. And when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and pay them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a shilling. And when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received every man a shilling. And when they received it, they murmured against the householder, saying, These last have spent but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat. But then he answered and said to one of them, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst thou not agree with me for a shilling? Take up that which is thine,

and go thy way ; it is my will to give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own ? or is thine eye evil, because I am good ? So the last shall be first and the first last.

It fell to the loving, impetuous Peter to draw forth from the Master, by his questions and frankness, great truths for our edification. One cannot help contrasting Peter in his trustfulness with the sons of Zebedee a little while after our parable was spoken. Not only did they come to assure themselves of first place in the Kingdom, but in true Eastern fashion they got their mother to do the asking. In contrast with all that, when a question of reward had arisen in Peter's mind, he comes openly to the point: "We have left everything and followed Thee ; what shall we have for our reward ?" The answer which the Master gave is supplemented and justified in our parable.

The grape-ripening season is an anxious time for the owners of vineyards ; it comes when labour is scarce, and when time means everything. As is the custom in Britain of hiring farm labourers at term times, so it is in Palestine for whole-time men. The casual labourers, however, are hired as need arises, and at any hour of the day when they are procurable. Jews and Arabs alike follow the

practice of gathering into the market-place for daily hire. The practice of hiring for the day and paying day by day is based upon Biblical usage (see Lev. xix. 13 ; Deut. xxiv. 15), and, so far as the labourer is concerned, daily payment is a necessity ; for the poverty that is prevalent in the East is far greater than the poverty of the West. The grape-gathering season lasts from the beginning of August to the end of September. When the rainy season sets in about the end of September, every day, indeed every hour, is vitally important, if the crop is to be gathered in safely. Thus the hire of labourers at a late hour is not at all unusual. The hiring of men at six and nine a.m., noon and three and five p.m. (Western time), is just what happens, but these men are paid according to the work done. The owner in the case of our parable, however, acts with great generosity towards the men who came to the vineyards at the late hour. He tells the paymaster to give each one of the men the same amount of pay. If we seek motives for this, two present themselves : (1) The fact that these men were not hired was no fault of theirs, and if they were paid just what was due, it would mean a supperless evening for the family. Out of the goodness of his heart, therefore, the owner

gives full wages for the day. (2) It is quite possible that the owner might reason that the late-comers had saved him a great deal by arriving just when they did, and that they were, therefore, worthy of full pay. Whichever motive actuated, it was thoughtful conduct ; but the men who had been working the whole day (and only those who have spent a day in the vineyards during the grape-gathering season know how very trying and hot it is) did not see it. They felt, naturally, aggrieved, and thought the late-comers had received too much or they too little. The good man of the vineyard pointed out to the early-comers that he had a perfect right to do what he pleased with his money ; they were receiving what they had contracted for, and that was all that they had any business with. The reasoning of the owner was quite what the case demanded, and was commercially just, but morally it does not appear to be plain that his action was quite fair. There can be no doubt that a man has a right to do with his money what pleases him, so long as he does no injustice to others. But conduct such as this would create discontent anywhere. After all, the men who came early to the work would in justice seem entitled to more reward than those who came late. The story,

however, is a parable, and in the interpretation, all injustice is seen to pass away.

Jesus said that those who had given up all and followed Him, for the regeneration of the world, were to judge the twelve tribes. This answer must have astounded even the bold Peter. They, a band of Galilean fishermen, judge the tribes of Israel! Impossible! What about the prophets and great teachers of the nation? Surely they must come first! Not so, says the Master; many that are last shall be first, and many who were first shall be last.

We, looking back from our vantage-point, see that this was so. These simple and faithful folk had given up everything to follow Him Who had nowhere to lay His head. They were the last of the prophets, the last in the old order of things, late-comers to be sure, but their work was of infinite value. They revolutionized the Roman Empire and the world, and, therefore, their reward must be of a nature compatible with the task committed to them and accomplished by them.

It is only when the parable is thought of from the viewpoint of the answer given to the disciples that the full justice of it becomes apparent. We cannot afford to make comparisons as to the value of the work of Moses

and the prophets, and that of the apostles: but Jesus made it, and His judgment is given to us in the parable. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews sums the matter up for us in a verse at the end of his review of the historic faith: "God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" (Heb. xi. 40).

God's vineyard is ever in need of workmen, and in His wisdom He calls men at all hours of the world's day, but while He calls many, only a few are chosen, not as a matter of doctrinal election, but from the viewpoint of fitness for the work. There were the seventy who had gone out to proclaim the Kingdom, but the small band of twelve were chosen to be the last of the old order and the first of the new, and thus—the last became the first. If there is a moral issue at all in the parable, it is decided by Him who never erred in His judgment of men and things; and the moral issue would have raised some difficulties, if these men who had given up everything for the Kingdom, though late-comers, had not been entitled to the same reward as the others who had striven for the good of the world. They were co-workers with Him in the regeneration, and as He was the regenerator Himself, those who shared the work with Him

took part in work such as men never had before, or have since, taken part in ; and it is, therefore, the pleasure of the Father to make them the judges of the tribes, and of all those who give up their all and follow Him.

XXIV

SERVICE AS DUTY

LUKE xvii. 7–10

But who is there of you, having a servant plowing or keeping sheep, that will say unto him, when he is come in from the field, Come straightway and sit down to meat; and will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank the servant because he did the things that were commanded? Even so ye also, when ye shall have done all things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do.

THE parable belongs to the period of Jesus' journeying up to Jerusalem, and if we take it in conjunction with Mark x., especially the last part of the chapter, and Matt. xx., the last part, the parable seems quite in keeping with the lesson which was needed on that occasion. It is quite possible that the last parable dealt with emboldened the sons of Zebedee to ask for the things they did, but of that we cannot be certain. That the request

made the Master feel uneasy about the selfishness of the two petitioners is amply set forth in the Matthæan and Marcan accounts. It is strange that Luke does not mention the incident at all. When all things are taken into consideration, it is reasonable to suggest that Luke did not think it necessary to tell us about the request, but chose rather to tell us the lesson which the Master taught about it.

We venture the suggestion that we have in our parable Luke's view of the matter, taken from the remarks that the Master made at the time. Chronologically, there is no difficulty in including our parable in the series of sayings belonging to that period. The conditions of the parable represent the life of Palestine as it was until the occupation by the British, and we turn to consider the local setting.

While the married workmen have their own quarters, and go to their homes on return from their work, the single men are retainers who, very often, have their food in the house of their employer. Since the women have their meals by themselves, it is the custom to get some of the retainers to wait at the table, especially when there are strangers in the house. The Master takes this custom to

illustrate His meaning of service. It is not only looked upon as the usual thing for the retainers to wait till their master has had his meal, but it is very often a cause of dispute who is to have the honour of waiting upon him. It is not looked upon as an extra service, but rather as a service to which the master is entitled, since he feeds these retainers, not as part of their wages, but apart from them. If the parable is meant for the special benefit of John and James, the point is readily seen. Their Master had the right to their service without any extra reward. All they were doing they should be doing, in virtue of the position they hold in the Kingdom. Their demand for reward is both unreasonable and unseemly. Their service is their duty.

If the parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard was the background for the disciples' demand, the lesson of this second parable stands out majestically as the vindication of the principle of payment by the master according to the prompting of his heart. The late-comers had indeed no demand of a legal or yet moral character; what was given was given out of the goodness of the master's heart. They were late-comers, and their asking for special reward was nothing short of downright

effrontery. It is not to be wondered at that the others were incensed when they heard of the request. There can be no doubt that the Master loved John and James, but He withheld nothing from them which His love could give. But He was not prepared for their deliberately asking something which could not but arouse the just anger of the others. He always gave what He had to give, but He did not have places of honour to give. In this He gave simply what the Lord of the vineyard bade Him give. This does not imply subordination of Jesus as God, but the perfect unity and equality in the Godhead. The Kingdom which He was establishing was not His Kingdom alone, but the Kingdom of the Godhead (Kingdom of God), and what there was to give in the Kingdom had to be given by God in the perfect unity of the Godhead.

To bring matters back to the disciples' request, it was undoubtedly based upon worldly authority, and we must turn to the closing word of the section in St. Mark's Gospel: "The Son of Man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister to, and to give His life a ransom for many." Authority, power, and seats of honour—these were not Christ's to give; these things were the gifts

of the world, and of the kings of the earth. Jesus came to give His very life. From that, let them learn the meaning of service. Let us learn it too. Most men give to the service of God what they can spare, what they will not miss, what will not cost them a moment's worry. Some people keep their charms and gifts for the service of the world, and bring to God their worn-out gifts and powers when the world has no further use for them. Let them, if they can, reconcile their conscience with their actions. But let not those who give, so as to feel the giving, who give up everything to follow Him, think that they are doing God a favour, and demand reward for it. God is an honest rewarder of all service, but He will keep the account Himself, and you need not present your bills to Him as did the Pharisee in the parable. Those who know how wrapt up in reward (Sech-ar) Judaism was, and still is, how everything is done with a view to the reward that is to be expected for each good action—though it must not be forgotten that in the ethics of the Father the principle of not working for reward is emphasized—will not think that the parable, in spite of its brevity, should not receive the very earnest attention of the Church. When we are led to think of reward, let our minds

travel to the great gift of God in Jesus Christ, and to Jesus' gift to us in His own precious life; then all our service will pale into insignificance, and we will say we have but done what was our duty.

XXV

THE BASIS OF FORGIVENESS

MATT. xviii. 23–35

Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, who would make a reckoning with his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, that owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not wherewith to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And the Lord of that servant, being moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. But that servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, who owed him a hundred denarii : and he laid hold on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay what thou owest. So his fellow-servant fell down and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee. And he would not : but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay that which was due. So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were exceeding sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord called him unto him, and saith to him, Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou besoughtest me : shouldest not thou also have had mercy on thy fellow-servant, even as I had mercy on thee ? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due. So shall also my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts.

THE problem dealt with in our parable is one that has been ever present to the human mind; and in Judaism forgiveness occupied a great part of its thought and teaching. While the parable is given to us in Matthew, it is only suggested in Luke xvii. 3–4. And after all, the parable simply reduces the lesson to unmistakable and Divine simplicity. The parable needs no comment: it is plainness itself. But we must have a care in the treatment of it, and be warned against juggling with figures. The sums involved might warn us against cabalistic folly. The first sum due is, if not impossible, at least very improbable. It runs into no less than £42,250,000; the second debt amounts to only £3 19s. 2d. But the contrast of the sums is not in the least exaggerated, for they represent the difference between the debts we owe to the great King and those that are owing us by our fellows. The figures give the difference between Divine and human forgiveness, and the contrast is as complete as it is true.

Since the principle of forgiveness is in question, let us note that, in the case of the steward, satisfaction is not given by the payment of the debt, but by free pardon on the part of the king because the debt could not be paid. This fact should burn itself in upon

our hearts and minds. Our indebtedness to the great King of kings is such that all we are, and have, cannot meet it. By contrast, the debts owed to us by our fellows fade into utter insignificance. Yet consider our treatment of our fellows. Does the parable put it in too strong language when it speaks of laying hold of the debtor by the throat and casting him into prison? Let life speak and everyday experience testify.

Turn to the Lord's Prayer and you find that it is taken for granted that we will forgive our debtors. But in the case in our parable our being forgiven is conditioned by our exercise of the quality of mercy.

Peter's question about the frequency of forgiveness was answered fully by the Master. The words "seventy times seven," conveying to the Jewish mind perfection in numbers, signified endless forgiveness. We might justly ask, Is this to be taken literally? Are we to understand that there is no limit to forgiveness? If we are meant to understand that, we must revise our entire conception of life and our relationship with God, and pray with the disciples, "Lord, increase our faith."

But I submit that this is against the teaching of the parable, in which the unforgiving servant is punished, and against the general

teaching of Jesus, as well as against our own experience.

It seems to me that the lesson is that, if the same person makes himself a continuous source of offence, we must not allow him to go on unpunished, but that we must not allow our hearts to reach a position in which we become incapable of forgiving our fellow-man. Jesus, with all the prophets, taught that there comes a time when Divine mercy gives place to Divine justice, when the unforgiving incur retribution, and so we must understand the matter. God knows when this time is reached, and we must wait on Him to know it too.

If we go back a little beyond the parable itself, we find Jesus Himself defending its limit. If your fellow sins against you, go to him or her and tell them about it; if they show that they recognize the injury inflicted upon you and are penitent, it is well. If they should not be willing to acknowledge their error, then bring some of your friends with you, that they may tell the right and wrong of the matter, for there are two sides to every question. If they agree that you have been wronged, and the party who wronged you still refuses to make amends, then you must bring the case before the

congregation (Ekklesia). If he is convicted by the congregation of wrong, and continues obdurate, then the limit has been reached, and you must treat him as you would treat one who is unfit for human society, leaving the account to be settled by Him Who can, and will, avenge every wrong.

These two statements at the first glance may seem conflicting, but they really are not. The case (cited from Matt. xviii. 15–18) deals with a party who has done wrong, but will not make amends or acknowledge his fault. In the case of our parable, the debtor acknowledges his debts, but pleads that he cannot make the necessary amends, yet promises to do so if given time. This represents our condition before God. If we acknowledge our debts and are conscious that, owing to our poverty, we are incapable of paying them, God pardons our debts for Jesus' sake; and, in like manner, when we are dealing with our fellows who are conscious of having done us wrongs, and they are willing to right the wrongs, though they find themselves unable to do so, we must take the will for the deed and pardon them. The Master wants us to be self-respecting. He offers us a basis on which we can come to our Heavenly Father, not as mere suppliants without any merit,

but as children who have sought, as far as they can, to realize in themselves the Godlike and Fatherlike qualities with which they have been endowed.

God does not forgive us just because we forgive. The essence of the principle of forgiveness constitutes an attribute of God, and is bound up with the entire plan of salvation; but one of its conditions is that, unless we are in possession of the quality, it cannot be exercised towards us. Christ was not a theorist; He was a practical man, as He was perfect God. The parable is not based on the impossible, but on the demands of life.

I suggest that Christian men and women, conscious of the greatness of God's pardon, do not act as did this steward towards his fellow; yet the parable would lead us to think that the case it sets forth is that of one whose own debts have been forgiven, who has tasted of God's mercy, but whose heart towards his fellows has remained adamant and merciless. While one has no right to speculate as to the reason why Divine forgiveness is granted to us, and while one cannot take in the whole problem of forgiveness and its attendant problems, yet Jesus encourages us to believe that love is the basis of Divine forgiveness. If our hearts are filled with

love, then forgiveness will flow out of them, but especially will this be the case if we keep in mind the enormous debt we are forgiven. The debt of our fellows will not find us hard and cruel, as was the steward of the parable. For we are asked to hold the Divine mercy towards us as the standard of our action. If this appeal does not move, if we think that the action of God towards us is one thing and ours towards our fellows another, let the final scene of the parable evoke what love will not. Let us think of ourselves in the position of the forgiven steward, enduring the righteous wrath of the king when he heard what his forgiven servant had done. Let us not be mistaken about the pardon granted to us. God will forgive our debts for Jesus' sake, but He will not forgive them unless we show by our acts towards our fellows that we have learned the sweetness of forgiven sin, that we have, out of the depths of our hearts, learned the real value of mercy, and that we have learned it to make use of it in our dealings with our fellow-men.

One need not reiterate the points raised in the parable. I look into my own heart, and I know how very difficult it is to forgive, but I also find there a power which helps me to do what I cannot do of myself. I think of

Him Who, while suffering the cruellest pain that ever man was called upon to suffer, prayed, " Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." But you will say, " That was the Man God, and I am but a poor imperfect mortal." Look, then, in point of time, a little beyond the cross, and see the proto-martyr Stephen, and hear his dying words, " Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." The souls of saints take leave of their mortal surroundings, forgiving with their last breath.

XXVI

THE SOURCES OF AUTHORITY

MATT. xxi. 23–32

And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was preaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one question, which if ye tell me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven or from men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why then did ye not believe him? But if we shall say, From men; we fear the multitude; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We know not. He also said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things. But what think ye? A man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in the vineyard. And he answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented himself, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Which of the two did the will of his father? They say, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye saw it, did not even repent yourselves afterward, that ye might believe him.

In this set of parables we have a very good illustration of the importance of knowing the background before reaching any definite interpretation, and we are left in no doubt (Matt. xxi. 23–28) about the conflict with the authorities which led to the parable being spoken. Theological matters, like everything else in life, must have a standard by which they are measured. Religion must have authority behind it, if it is to be effective. Roman Catholicism has its Pope; Protestantism its Bible; Mohammedanism the Koran; and Judaism its Priests and Rabbis. Now the Master's influence over the crowd was increasing daily, and, as His influence increased, the disquietude of the ecclesiastical authorities increased also. They determined to challenge Him to show His credentials as a teacher. No fair-minded person could take exception to such action, if it was an honest effort to sift matters for the cause of order and peace.

Jesus had not received the outward authority deemed necessary at that stage in history. He had not, so far as we know, been to the schools of the Rabbis, nor had He obtained any other qualification to give Him the right to teach. Our passages raise the question by what authority the Baptist taught, and we must say that, unless the story of the Baptist

as related in the Gospel, especially that of his birth as related in Luke i., is to be given full weight, his hold on the people and his place as a teacher are incomprehensible.

Jesus was asked point-blank, "By what authority do you do the things you are doing? Who gave you the authority?"

The first impression one gets from Jesus' answer is that He begged the question, but a closer scrutiny reveals how sincerely desirous of answering it He was. For He says, in so many words, "Let us come to a common understanding of the idea of authority. Let us take the Baptist as a concrete case. What was the nature of his authority? Was it Divine or human?" This simple test, reaching to the heart of the question, confounded His interrogators. They had made a show of recognizing the Baptist's authority, and the people believed he was 'a prophet.' If a prophet, his authority was Divine authority. They could not admit that, for John the Baptist had borne witness to Jesus. Neither dared they to say that John's authority was not derived from the school of the Rabbis, for they feared the people. So they took refuge in silence. "We cannot tell," they said.

Then said Jesus, "If you do not care to answer My fair question, I decline to answer

yours directly, but let Me show you. Here is My interpretation of authority. First there is paternal authority. A certain man had two sons. He asked each of them to go and work in his vineyard. One demurred and would not accept the paternal authority, but, on second thoughts, he realized that the father had a right to ask him to go, and he went. The second son, on being requested to go, consented courteously, but did not go." The parable, though so simple, is deeply conceived and far-reaching. It must have recalled to His questioners the commandment of the Deuteronomic code, " If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, that will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and, though they chasten him, will not hearken unto them ; then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place ; and they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice ; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones : so shalt thou put away the evil from the midst of thee ; and all Israel shall hear, and fear " (Deut. xxi. 18–21).

They were bound to admit that mere

acquiescence is not enough to make authority effective. Having obtained their answer, He draws for them the conclusion on the basis of the Baptist's position. "The Baptist came to you in a straight, legitimate way, in proper and rightful manner, and you believed him not. What do you say to the question of authority now? Then a still more discomfiting comparison is drawn. "By your own admission you are worse than the publicans and street women, for they believed and repented." That must have made the inquisitors' ears tingle. It does not seem to me legitimate to argue from this passage as to whether such folk as the publicans and street women have priority of entrance into heaven. The case is not one of righteous and sinful, but of sinners who repent and self-righteous who do not repent. No one doubts that the repentant sinner is better than the impenitent. The Master concludes the parable in the same logical style that He began it. "You saw the Baptist work; the publicans and women of the street bore him witness, but you answer Me by saying, 'We know not.' You have not the courage of your conviction. And what you are doing is to flout the authority of God, the Father."

MATT. xxi. 33–46

Hear another parable: There was a man that was a householder, who planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into another country. And when the season of the fruits drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, to receive his fruits. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them in like manner. But afterward he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But the husbandmen, when they saw the son, said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him and take his inheritance. And they took him, and cast

MARK xii. 1–12

And he began to speak unto them in parables. A man planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and digged a pit for a winepress, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into another country. And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruits of the vineyard. And they took him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. And again he sent unto them another servant; and him they wounded in the head, and handled shamefully. And he sent another; and him they killed: and many others; beating some and killing some. He had yet one, a beloved son: he sent him last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. But those husbandmen said among themselves,

LUKE xx. 9–19

And he began to speak unto the people this parable: A man planted a vineyard, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into another country for a long time. And at the season he sent unto the husbandmen a servant, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard: but the husbandmen beat him, and sent him away empty. And he sent yet another servant: and him also they beat, and handled him shamefully, and sent him away empty. And he sent yet a third: and him also they wounded, and cast him forth. And the lord of the vineyard said, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: and it may be they will reverence him. But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned one with another, saying, This is the heir; let us kill him, that

him forth out of the vineyard, and killed him. When therefore the lord of the vineyard shall come, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those miserable men, and will let out the vineyard unto other husbandmen, who shall render him the fruits in their seasons. Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, The same was made the head of the corner: This was from the Lord, And it is marvellous in our eyes?

Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And he that falleth on this stone shall be broken to pieces: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will scatter him as dust.

This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him forth out of the vineyard. What therefore will the Lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others. Have ye not read even this Scripture:

The stone which the builders rejected, The same was made the head of the corner: This was from the Lord, And it is marvellous in our eyes? And they sought to lay hold on him; and they feared the multitude; for they perceived that he spake the parable against them: and they left him, and went away.

the inheritance may be ours, and they cast him forth out of the vineyard, and killed him. What therefore will the lord of the vineyard do unto them? He will come and destroy these husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others. And when they heard it, they said, God forbid. But he looked upon them, and said, What then is this that is written,

The stone which the builders rejected, The same was made the head of the corner: Everyone that falleth on that stone shall be broken to pieces; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will scatter him as dust. And the scribes and the chief priests sought to lay hands on him in that very hour; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he spake this parable against them.

And when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. And when they sought to lay hold on him, they feared the multitudes, because they took him for a prophet.

The Synoptists record this parable with very little variation, and they are all agreed regarding its background. The matter of authority is taken a step further by the Master. From paternal authority Jesus passes to the Divine authority which made Israel a nation possessing a revealed religion. One cannot say how much the Isaiah parable (Isa. v. 1–8) influenced Him in the elaboration of His theme ; but the Isaiah parable looms large in the background of the mind as one reads this parable. Its conclusion is the same, though the setting is suited to the occasion. The husbandmen are Israel. They had received the vineyard in a productive state, and the lord of the vineyard required a return. As the simile makes the lord of the vineyard an absent landlord, it became necessary for him to relegate his authority to his servants. How very fitting the parable is to the relationship of God and Israel need not be pointed out, but Israel's sin as murderers of the prophets is brought home with force. Both tradition and history join in telling the sad story of murdered prophet and priest.

These men came by the order of the owner of the vineyard; their authority was beyond dispute; but how were they treated? As a last resort the lord of the vineyard sends his son. He carries an authority all his own, but from their viewpoint they have reason to fear and hate him more than the servants. They will kill him too, and thus ensure to themselves his inheritance. The leaders or some of the people, like David in the Nathan parable, act as the judges, and then realize that unconsciously they have passed judgment on themselves.

The parable is too heartrending, in both subject-matter and consequence for Judaism, for me to dwell on it. Judaism has reaped the consequence of their judgment for nearly two thousand years, and the end is not yet.

The Divine Authority

When we turn from the details of the parable to the contribution it makes to the general understanding of the question of authority, thoughts crowd in on the mind and call for comment.

The Divine authority does not come from any particular school, though such men as Elijah and Elisha belonged to the schools of

the prophets. Amos, for example, was a herdsman. God appoints His servants in His Divine wisdom according to His own methods, but the irony of the parable is found in the fact that the questioners set up a claim to authority because they were the successors of the very men their fathers put to death. The Divine authority comes by the Voice which speaks to the heart and mind of the Messenger. I am not to be taken here as speaking against "Apostolic succession," but our parable permits the conclusion that it is possible to be in good Apostolic succession without being Divinely appointed. The questioners of the Master had every outward right of authority. They sat in the seats of Moses and the prophets: could any claim to authority be greater? The Baptist and Jesus had none of the outward authority, but on the showing of history they were God's true messengers. It behoves the Churches to examine themselves, less haply they be found in good Apostolic succession, but not Divinely appointed.

It is not only Jerusalem which has killed her prophets.

When the parable penetrated the minds of the inquisitors, it roused them to fury. "We must kill Him," was their answer to His

argument. It would serve no purpose to enter into an argument as to whether Jesus was the Son,' 'Heir' or 'Beloved' set forth in the parable. The Master of Jesus College, Cambridge (Arthur Gray, M.A.), contributed a very scholarly article on the subject of this parable in the *Hibbert Journal*, vol. xix. No. 3, October 1920, pp. 42–52. I leave the matter to those interested to form their own conclusion, but John the Baptist, as 'Son,' 'Heir' or 'Beloved,' is somewhat of a novelty.

To me the lesson of the parable is clear, apart from its incidentals, and very important these are. The main object of the parable is to bring out the true meaning of the idea of authority. The father has an inherent authority as a father. This authority, when translated into the spiritual sphere, they had disregarded. God, as the Owner of the people, had sent His messengers and then His Son. Their treatment of the messengers had been harsh and cruel, not because they in the least degree doubted the authority of the Sender, but because of their wickedness of heart. They stood condemned by their own sentence. Is God's authority, then, to be ineffective? The next parable answers that.

MATT. xxii. 1–14

And Jesus answered and spake again in parables unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a certain king, who made a marriage feast for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the marriage feast : and they would not come. Again he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them that are bidden, Behold, I have made ready my dinner ; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready : come to the marriage feast. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise ; and the rest laid hold on his servants, and treated them shamefully, and killed them. But the king was wroth ; and he sent his armies, and destroyed these murderers, and burned their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they that were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore unto the partings of the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage feast. And those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all, as many as they found, both bad and good : and the wedding was furnished with guests. But when the king came in to behold the guests, he saw there a man who had not on a wedding-garment : and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding-garment ? And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and cast him out into the outer darkness ; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few chosen.

From parental and Divine authority, the Master passes to the authority of the King in the Kingdom. There can be no doubt about the belief of Jesus, that He was fulfilling the rôle of Messiah. Even by the wildest imaginings the parable which follows cannot be applied to John. The idea of feasting

the people in the Messianic era is one of old standing (see Isa. xxv. and xxvi.).

The stories of "The Great Ox," "The Specially Preserved Wine" and "The Leviathan"—the huge fish kept for that feast—are told us in our Jewish homes at a very early age. In pious homes like ours, the imagination was kindled and fed, and faith was sustained by the Messianic hope; and the stories of the feast of fat things laid up for us gave it a material touch which made it the paradise of our childlike hope.

I am not in a position to state if these beliefs were current in the Master's day, but holding the view that I do, that the ideas were based upon the prophecy in Isa. xxv. and xxvi., I am inclined to the opinion that they did exist, and formed the background of the parable.

Be that as it may, the fact remains that the Master used the parable as He did, to complete His argument on authority, and bring it home to His hearers that the Messianic Kingdom is not to fail because of the refusal of those invited to come to it. The parable presents very few difficulties; the local colouring is what one expects it to be.

The usual thing is to send the 'Sham-as-im' (men whose business it is to invite and serve

at the wedding) to invite the specially favoured; others, especially the poor, attend without invitation, and are well cared for. The specially invited are expected to come in garments fitting the occasion. There cannot be any reasonable doubt that those alluded to as the invited guests were the Jews, and that the parable is distinctly meant to suit the Messianic feast. It is not usual for folk invited to an ordinary marriage feast either to refuse or to ill-treat the servants (or, better, stewards). On the contrary, I have known folk to be reconciled at wedding feasts who had long been on bad terms. The further fact of the burning of the whole city, as ordered by the king, shows that the parable is viewed from a larger aspect than an ordinary wedding. The refusal having taken place, the king now exercises his authority, and orders his servants to go out and bring folk in from wherever they could be got. His listeners would think, well, a fine wedding that would be—made up of all and sundry—publicans and sinners. The Master adds a thought to elucidate that point. Not all who came were, indeed, made welcome; there are demanded certain qualifications, one of which is that of being fittingly clothed for the occasion. We must not speculate as to what

the wedding-garment means in the spiritual realm; sufficient for us to know that certain qualifications were necessary for the guests at the marriage feast, and non-observance of these was severely punished.

Israel had received the invitation of the gracious King; it refused it, and went the length of killing the messengers who brought it.

The answer to the question, "By what authority do you these things, and who gave it thee?" is now complete.

First, authority is inherent in the human family relationship. Second, there is the Divine authority which each prophet receives from God. Third, there is the special authority of God as King of the Kingdom the Messiah is to inaugurate. Thus is completed the whole cycle of thought on the question. A greater vindication of authority as such is not found in the world's literature. The lessons embodied in these parables cannot but deeply affect one of my race, but I know God has not cast off His people. My own position proves that to me. It applies equally to the Christian folk who are taking their place at the wedding feast unfittingly clothed for it. If God did not spare Israel, He likewise will not spare them.

XXVII

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF TORCH-BEARERS

MATT. XXV. 1–13

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For the foolish, when they took their lamps, took no oil with them : but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. Now while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. But at midnight there is a cry, Behold, the bridegroom ! Come ye forth to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us your oil ; for our lamps are going out. But the wise answered, saying, Peradventure there will not be enough for us and you : go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went away to buy, the bridegroom came ; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage feast : and the door was shut. Afterward come also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily, I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour.

THIS parable is one of the most difficult in the N.T. The difficulties it raises are not found in the lack of clarity nor yet in want of background, but they are found in the very

simplicity of the words and thoughts which are set forth. No serious student of the N.T. is unaware of the teaching of the Master regarding the Parousia. The subject is not found in an isolated passage, but forms part of the warp and woof of the teaching of Jesus, towards the end of His ministry. It would be quite legitimate to argue that the parabolic part of this passage does not require to be treated from an eschatological viewpoint, for it can with equal force be applied to any situation in which carelessness and unpreparedness disqualify folk from entering into the Kingdom, but the fact remains that this parable is found very intimately connected with those that deal with the Parousia of Jesus.

My theological difficulty is this. If Jesus taught that He was returning in person, we are forced to conclude that He has left something undone which He has to return to do. Such a view would raise grave difficulties as to the efficacy of His achievement in the flesh, but we will look at the teaching of the parable in its local setting before we go on to ascertain the issues it raises. The local setting, while out of the ordinary, is neither improbable nor impossible, though it is not usual for people invited to a marriage to be refused admission.

The story in the parable is one which would

be well known to His hearers as it is drawn from the everyday life of the community.

A marriage had been arranged between a couple living at some distance from each other ; the marriage would be arranged by the respective parents of the couple. The fact that one party resided at some distance from the other would, as a rule, indicate that the parties to be married belonged to a wealthy and influential family. In the case of our parable, the bridegroom came from a distant part. The usual procedure in a case like our parable would be that some young men, friends of the bride, would mount their horses and go out to meet the bridegroom ; they would be followed on foot by a number of unmarried girl friends of the bride. If the arrival of the bridegroom was expected in the afternoon, the young riders would post an outlook at a point of vantage on the road by which the bridegroom was expected to arrive, and would themselves engage in races on their horses. The girl friends of the bride would sit and watch the races. As soon as the bridegroom and his cavalcade came into view, the posted sentry would give the signal, and all the company would move to meet the bridegroom. The girls would sing the praise of the couple to be married, especially that

of the bride. The strength of the company which goes to meet the bridegroom, as a rule, indicates social standing and family connections of the bride. The ability of the girls selected to chant the praise of the couple indicates to the bridegroom the taste and accomplishment of the bride. It is, therefore, a matter of great importance for the bride to make a wise and careful selection from among her friends in order to create a good first impression.

If the arrival of the bridegroom should occur after it is dark, then the girl friends of the bride have to add to their duty of chanting praise that of torch-bearing, in order to light the way for the bridegroom and his friends. It is not usual for a bridegroom to reach the house of his bride at a very late hour, especially if the marriage is to take place on the day of his arrival. The bridegroom, as well as his bride, fasts the whole day of the marriage. Both of them go to the cemeteries in which their dead friends are buried, and inform their dead relatives of the event about to take place in their lives, and ask for their intercessions. The couple have to conform to certain ceremonial purification laws, and altogether the day is made a very solemn one for them.

In the case of our parable, the bridegroom was expected to arrive during the evening. The girls who were selected to welcome the bridegroom were told to get their torches in readiness, and they did so, and went forward. But while they were delayed, some of them, instead of awaiting the signal of the bridegroom's approach, lit their torches and let them burn dry and go out; and to make matters worse, they had been careless in making provision against the late-coming of the bridegroom, and they used up all their oil.

When the cry was at last raised to intimate the bridegroom's approach, five of the girls suddenly realized that their torches had burnt out and they could not perform the duties entrusted to them. They sought help from their friends, but the friends could give them no help, as all the oil they had was required for their own torches. They were advised to run and buy oil in the town, and while they were away getting oil, the bridegroom came and was escorted to the house of the bride, and the doors were shut. The five who acted so foolishly and thoughtlessly were grief-stricken, not only for themselves but for the bride who had committed to them her honour and trust, and came knocking at the door where the wedding was taking place,

possibly to offer their apologies. The bridegroom answered the door, and denied all knowledge of them.

In actual life the folly of these girls would be strongly condemned by every one, because of the light and dishonourable way they treated the trust of their friend; the bridegroom especially would be upset by the manner in which they failed his bride, and he would see to it that they had no part in the rejoicings. The shutting of the girls out may seem a very hard punishment, but, when all things are taken into consideration, the punishment was righteous. People may act dishonourably towards the Church, but the Church's Bridegroom will avenge her wrongs.

We turn now to the question, Which of the lessons does the Master wish His hearers to learn? The answer is supplied for us by the Master Himself: "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh" (verse 13). There is very little doubt of this being part of the parable; indeed, it is essential to the parable, which would be incomplete without it.

It is very difficult to escape from the conclusion that the reference here is to some future time, for no other meaning can be got from the passage without doing violence

to it. Of course, for those who argue that the parable is not the Master's at all, the whole question is settled at once. Wellhausen, followed by Mr. C. G. Montefiore and others, would probably have us believe that Luke xii. 35–36 and xiii. 25 are the original of this parable, and that the version of Matthew is late. For myself I believe the parable is substantially as Jesus spoke it. I have had to fight the fact of a Parousia out in my Christian experience, and so the matter means something more to me than textual criticism. I argued, following St. Paul: If Jesus is the Messiah, how is it that He did not fulfil and bring about what I, as a Jew, was taught to believe He would? The answer was furnished by St. Paul: He is coming back again to do that. But as I realized the complete efficacy of His salvation, I had to struggle with the thought, What is He coming back for? I look for a physical as well as a moral redemption of the body. As I examine the human body and see the many members which, at one time in the history of the race, served useful purposes, but have now ceased to be of any value, as I read the opinion of men like the late Professor P. Metchnikoff that our very stomachs will in time become a vestigial organ, I believe we are moving towards the redemp-

tion of the body. I again ask myself, What is the reason for Jesus' coming again? The answer given by some, "To take up His bride," or "To carry away His saints," neither satisfies my questions nor answers them. My conclusion is that the doctrine of the Parousia is too well grounded in the teaching of the Gospels to be made away with by the magic wand of criticism. Also, there are a great many things in the plan and providence of God for the race yet which I do not understand, and the Parousia is one of them. I am content not to ask any further questions. I have my duty to keep the torch burning and not to concern myself with days or hours. If, in the wisdom of God, it becomes necessary to send His Son back into this world, I should be ready to welcome Him as becomes my Lord.

Let us not speculate too much upon the details of the parable, but rather take its main lesson—that we cannot afford to waste our oil to no purpose; the honour of the bride (the Church) is committed to us as a sacred trust. Let us use our oil judiciously, that, whatever the purpose of God may be for the future, we may be found ready to usher it in with watchful joy and alert mind and heart.

XXVIII

POUNDS AND TALENTS

MATT. XXV. 14–30

For as it is when a man, going into another country, called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one; to each according to his several ability; and he went on his journey. Straightway he that received the five talents went and traded with them, and made other five talents. In like manner he also that received the two gained another two. But he that received the one went away and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. Now after

MARK XIII. 34

It is as when a man, sojourneying in another country, having left his house, and given authority to his servants, to each one his work, commanded also the porter to watch.

LUKE XIX. 11–26

And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the Kingdom of God was immediately to appear. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called ten servants of his, and gave them ten pounds, and said unto them, Trade ye herewith till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent an ambassage after him, saying, We will not that this man reign over us. And it came to pass, when he was come back again, having received the kingdom, that he commanded these servants unto whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by trading. And the first came before him, saying, Lord, thy pound hath made ten pounds more. And he said unto him, Well done, thou good servant: because

a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and maketh a reckoning with them. And he that received the five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: lo, I have gained other five talents. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. And he also that received the two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: lo, I have gained other two talents. His lord said unto thou wast found faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Thy pound, Lord, hath made five pounds. And he said unto him also, Be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I kept laid up in a napkin: for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that which thou layedst not down, and reapest that which thou didst not sow. He saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I am an austere man, taking up that which I laid not down, and reaping that which I did not sow; then wherefore gavest thou not my money into the bank, and I at my coming should have required it with interest? And he said unto them that stood by, Take away from him the pound, and give it unto him that hath the ten pounds. And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds. I say unto you, that unto every one that hath shall be given; but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away from him.

him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. And he also that had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou didst not sow, and gathering where thou didst not scatter: and I was afraid, and went away and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, thou hast thine own. But his lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I did not scatter; thou oughtest therefore to

have put my money to the bankers, and at my coming I should have received back mine own with interest. Take ye away therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him that hath the ten talents. For unto everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance : but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away. And cast ye out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness : there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.

THE problem of the identity of the parables of the "Talents" and "Pounds" is one in which the opinion of an individual can count but little. It has been treated by critics, exegetes and parabolists with enough success to convince either the inclusivists or separatists. The one factor which has received less attention than it deserves is the passage in Mark. In the Marcan passage we have the gist of both parables and perhaps a hint as to its original form ; but it is precarious to call in one of the Gospels to arbitrate between the others, for we are as yet far from agreement as to the priority of the Gospels. If we may take Mark's passage as a guide to the proper setting of the parables, we must conclude that it is part of the eschatological discourse and, therefore, in its right setting in Matthew. But even should this conclusion be accepted, it does not follow that Luke's version is of the same incident as that of Matthew ; it only bears out the Matthæan parable in so far as its eschatological value is concerned.

The pertinent question is, Is it possible that Jesus used the same line of reasoning on two different occasions with a view of teaching two distinctive lessons ? He would be a bold man who would rule that possibility out altogether. Experience would teach us that the use of a point to illustrate a certain lesson by no means precludes its use, in a somewhat different form, to illustrate another point, on another occasion. St. Luke gives a very definite reason for the use of his parable, and it is left for us to discover if the parable, as it stands, conveys a lesson illuminating the point in question. A casual glance, certainly, does not help us to accept St. Luke's point of view, but a closer examination gives us a clue, if not to the Master's reasoning, at least to that of Luke or his informant.

That there is set forth in verse 11 a truth which the Gospels and history confirm in regard to the expectation of the people, and even of the disciples, that Jesus would usher in the Messianic Kingdom, on His arrival at Jerusalem, no serious person can doubt, but how this parable was to dispel that belief is not clear. It surely cannot be argued that any of the disciples drew a different conclusion from that set forth in verse 11 at the time stated. The desire of the author of our

Gospel to disprove the correctness of the impression must belong to a period subsequent to the crucifixion of Jesus. This conclusion that Jesus was not to set up the expected Kingdom was justified by the event. That Jesus sought to dissuade both His disciples and the people from that view may be granted in spite of the things which took place on the Sunday of His entry into the Holy City. But again, how does the parable explain His real intentions, or in what way does it contradict the popular point of view?

Are we to understand from the opening words of the parable that Jesus is seeking to teach the people that He has yet to take a long journey before He receives His Kingdom? If words mean anything, verse 12 means that He was to go to a far country to receive His Kingdom. The illustration would not be unfamiliar to His hearers, for the Herods were constantly travelling to Rome to press their claims for a throne. The people's hatred of Herod's sons, each and all of them, are also matters of history. What follows in the parable is an elaboration of the thought. Before going, the nobleman calls ten servants together and gives each one of them a 'mina' (the silver 'mina' was worth £6 17s. 6d., the

gold 'mina' £95 5s.). They are to trade with this money till his return. They all do so save one, and all the nine are more or less successful in their trading; and each one is rewarded according to his measure of success.

The tenth, however, keeps the money lying in his house unused, and on the request of the king for an account of his dealings, tells him that he knew him for an exacting and hard man, and he simply kept his money intact.

The king convicts him out of his own mouth in this wise: "If you indeed knew I was looking for gain, you should have invested my money and not acted as you have done." The king commands the money to be taken from the unprofitable servant and to be given to the man who had profited most by his investments. The summing up of this side of the parable is one with which only theorists can find fault; practical men and women will agree that unused gifts are worse than no gifts, and unused money a waste of money. The only thing that can be done with a person who will not use his trust is to dispossess him of it.

The folk who sent their message of hate after the nobleman have now to reckon with a king, and he pays them in hard coin for their insolence. The parable has two distinct

factors—the nobleman and his servants, and the nobleman and his enemies. I do not think it is carrying the parable into too minute detail to suggest that Jesus (or St. Luke) is making a distinction between the nobleman when he sets out and the nobleman when he returns; and that these are the actual distinctions between Jesus' position then and His position when His journey shall be ended and He returns. It would be quite fair to argue that it is not legitimate to press these points too much. I readily admit the dangers of such interpretation, but I suggest that, unless the parable is considered in this way, it does not appear why Luke or his informant understood it to have any allusion to the question of establishing the Kingdom.

If it could be proved that Jesus did not make use of the parable in the words we have, but that He used Matthew's version, or if we could make reasonably sure that Jesus neither used the Matthæan nor Lucan version, but rather the Marcan, or some similar short statement, it would yet be legitimate to argue that the parable as set forth in our third Gospel is a reasoned interpretation of the short sayings of Jesus, that its point of view deserves careful consideration, and that its lesson is well worth while contemplating.

Whatever the case may have been in so far as the original is concerned, the fact remains that our Gospels are the only positive documents of the sayings of the Master, and that while we may disagree with their conclusions, we must give them at least what we claim for ourselves—namely, the right to their opinion.

I am forced to the conclusion that, whatever the theory of the original of the parable may have been, St. Luke or his informant drew a lesson from it differing from the author of Q or the later editors. If that is so, we must give full value to it, and furthermore, set forth its particular viewpoint.

The teaching of this parable, so far as I can understand it, then is:

I. That at the time of going to Jerusalem, Jesus sought to convey to His hearers that He had not yet received His Kingdom, that the people's view was that He was to inaugurate or obtain a Kingdom, but this was yet in the future, and He was going on a journey.

II. The multitude will reject Him.

III. To His servants He will entrust His goods, and they must be careful how they use His trust.

IV. When He returns as King, He will reward His servants and destroy His enemies.

V. This may only be an incidental lesson, but it is, nevertheless, very forcefully put. The man who put his 'mina' in his napkin was not compelled to accept it. If he thought as he did about the hardness of the departing nobleman, he should have refused to take the money. The lesson is plain enough. You cannot accept a privilege and shirk its responsibilities. That, in fact, both the disciples and the multitude were doing. They would have been glad enough to be partakers of the Messianic Kingdom as they saw it, but it must have no cross. The sons of Zebedee showed their irresponsibility in this matter, as did also the crowd, in the events which followed.

We now turn to the passage in Matthew.

The difference in the sum of money involved, namely, that between a mina (£6 17s. 6d., silver) and a talent (£412 10s., silver, and £5770, gold), need not delay us. The difference between the distribution of the money is, however, somewhat more serious. In the Lucan parable, all the servants get a like share; in this parable they get different amounts. The person who gives the money out in this parable is 'a man' (in Luke, 'a nobleman'), and on coming back he is in the same social position as when he left (in Luke, the nobleman had become a king). No

mention is made of enemies or their treatment. The treatment of the unprofitable servant is somewhat different, too. I search in vain to find any real similarity in the general treatment of the parables or in details, and I am not able to agree with those who will insist on identity. The lessons of this parable as I understand them are :

I. Diversity of gifts, which carries with it diversity of responsibility.

II. That to be entrusted with responsibility and not to make use of it is a sin.

III. That reward is due to those who make good use of their gifts.

The parable here brings out the special points in the " Ten Virgin " parable, for the five foolish girls wasted their oil, and made light of the honour of the bride and the responsibility committed to them.

The Marcan Version

The tenth verse in Mark is in keeping with its author's general style—short, and to the point. There is no room for speculation. The Son of Man is indicated as the one meant in the parable. He commands the porter to watch ; not the people to whom the work was given to be done. Their only care was to be

at their work, and, so long as they were working, their duty was being fulfilled.

While the passage is very suggestive of the eschatological point of view, if we take it back far enough it shows how futile speculation concerning that point is.

The three passages, while dealing in the main with one principle, are sufficiently important individually to justify their individual inclusion in the N.T. And, whatever criticism may have to say about the origin and the original of the parables, one thing is clear: that if the authors of our Gospels were capable of clothing a single statement of the Master's with such eternal truths and such profound wisdom, we are as safe in taking their interpretation of the mind of the Master as we are that of any one else who has invested his talents in the search after truth; and when the truth is backed by human experience, as are the lessons of these passages, all one can say is, if they are not verbally Christ's, they are very Christlike, and therefore deserve a place of honour in the hearts and minds of every devout Christian.

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